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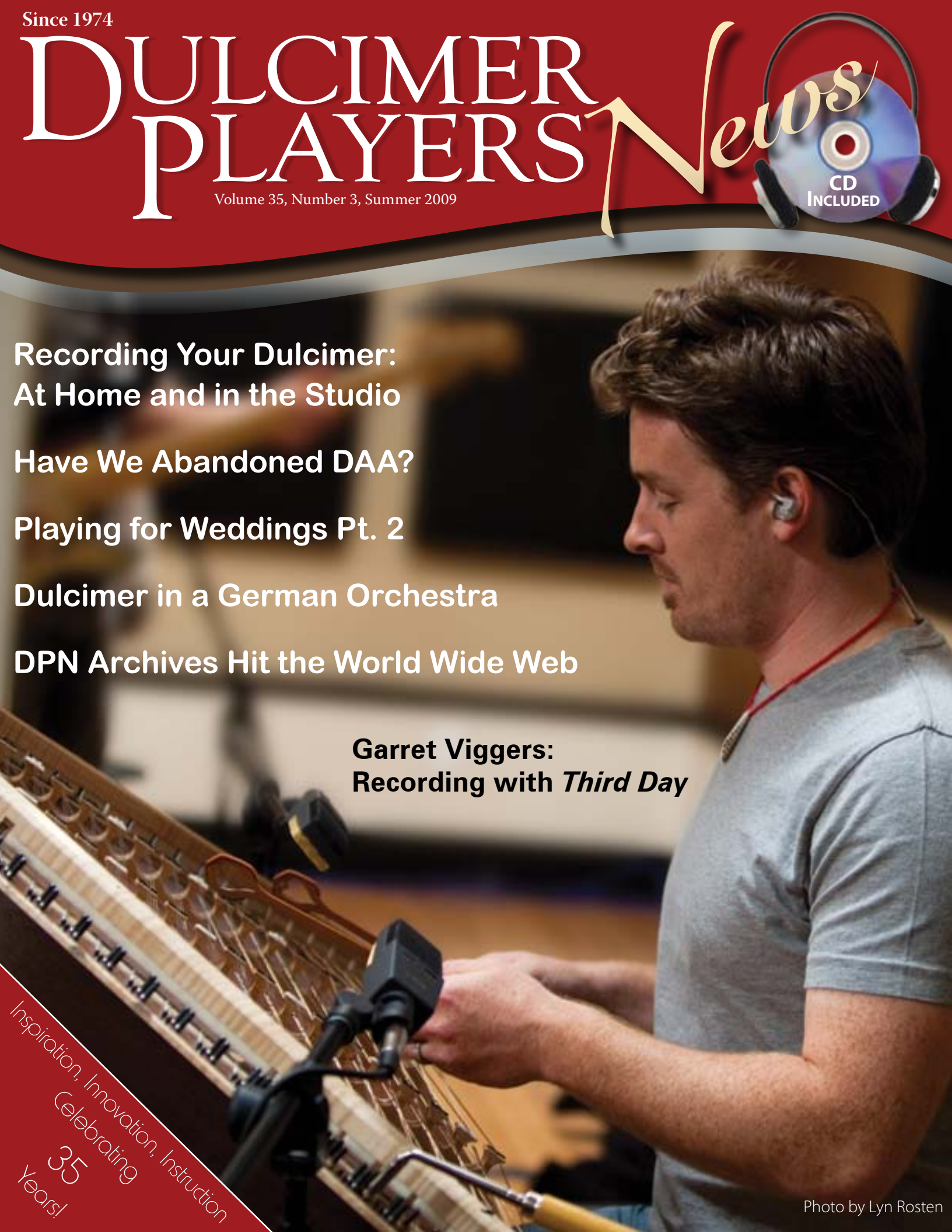
Dulcimer Players News

Volume 35, Number 3, Summer 2009

CD Included



Recording Your Dulcimer: At Home and in the Studio

Have We Abandoned DAA?

Playing for Weddings Pt. 2

Dulcimer in a German Orchestra

DPN Archives Hit the World Wide Web

Garret Viggers: Recording with *Third Day*

Inspiration, Innovation, Instruction
Celebrating 35 Years!

Photo by Lyn Rosten

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I've had 3 dulcimers for 15+ years. (McSpadden, Dennis Dorogi, and Ron Ewing). I had a heart attack in 1995 and haven't played since. Thanks to your magazine I'm inspired to take some lessons and begin again. I'm 86 years old! I took lessons at the Folk Music Shop in Claremont, CA way back when.
Betty Reich, CA

Another brilliant and colorful magazine, they just get better and better! The article which has really inspired and impressed me in this spring issue is "Little Smith The Dulcimer Man" by Fred Petrick. What a remarkable man! It makes you wonder what other amazing facts lie hidden in the past. Thank you for keeping the motivation up with your great magazine.
Christine Smith, United Kingdom

Editor's Note: Christine, I too was inspired by that article. While we have no way of knowing how great a player Little Smith actually was, we can certainly tell that even in the mid 1800's, he took his dulcimer playing seriously. He was quite a marketer too, and I was embarrassed at my own business cards after seeing his!

The recent DPN is another great one… have read and reread… and the CD is awesome, thanks.
Mary Paddock, IN

Please always remember those of us who will never be professional. I am 69 years old and have only played 4 1/2 years. Learning, timing, speed are all issues. I want to enjoy playing, however so much is critical. Thank you! Great magazine!
Jerry Silvers, OH

I have been a subscriber and player since the early '80s, and there is certainly no reason to stop now. Love the magazine and information that it provides.
Dave DePasqua, IL

Thank you. I recommend this journal to anyone who tells me they also own, play, or love dulcimer music. My favorites are many: the sheet music; lessons in print with tips from exceptional players -access to these folks for more lessons via their advertisements; the tips on performance: practice, tuning (added one gem I hadn't known), setting, style; the stories -instruments, names, faces, history.
Erin Hussey, WI

Love DPN! All the articles are top-notch; I especially enjoy the ones by Stephen Seifert. The CDs are a wonderful bonus—what a great sampler of talented artists! Can't wait to see the next issue; here's my renewal. Keep up the great work.
Janet Henderson, AL

Your magazine is great, so informative. Could you include an article on strings for mountain dulcimer? I would like to know more about size and range of notes, etc. Does length of fretboard effect sound? Maybe preference for different tunings. This would be very helpful to me. Your new format is very professional and I look forward to each issue. Keep up the excellent work.
Merl Griffin, CA

Editor's Note: Great idea Merl. We'll put it on the list of future topics.

I've often thought the blending of the hammered dulcimer and the sitar would be a great sound. I enjoyed the recent CD track 15 of COB, *Music of the Ages* featuring the dulcitar. It would be nice if these instruments were available—luthiers take note!
Sam Wilson, DE

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the latest (spring) issue of DPN. Just when I think, "It can't get any better," it does!! Thank you so much for all the love and passion you put into the publication and the wonderful world of dulcimer playing.
Nancy Snyder, TX
Great magazine and I've listened to the CD—I can't even tell you how many times. Great music—and I'm a rock n' roll person that followed the Grateful Dead (w/o drugs). The music just boggles my mind, it's so soothing to listen to. Been playing *Song of Hope* on my guitar—what a beautiful song. Keep up the great work. Will become a subscriber soon, also going to purchase a dulcimer.
Ed Lampich, PA

I'm so glad to get your magazine. It just keeps getting better all the time…Thank you for a very great news update.
Gloria J. Case, FL

I have been a satisfied subscriber for about 5 years. I thoroughly enjoy the magazine and the CDs. Keep up the good work.
John Wood, OH

David Essig forwarded to us your kind words on the Double Vision CD. I'm writing for Rick Scott who doesn't use a computer.

Your words made Rick's day! Each issue of DPN is eagerly awaited here on this island off the west coast of Canada where there are not a great many dulcimer players. We really enjoy the new format of the magazine and the sampler and Rick was honoured to have *Tears and Laughter* included in the latest sampler. Interesting you chose that song which was inspired by a blind child who built a tiny dulcimer from wood and a rubber band during a dulcimer making workshop Rick gave at the Faro Folk Festival in the Yukon in 1976 but was never recorded till now.

Rick has spent 40 years spreading dulcimer joy in nine countries around the world. In northern Canada the kids thought his dulcimer was an Electric Snowshoe so that's what he called his first children's recording which went gold (50,000 copies sold) on cassette!

We've just sent you a brief precis of Rick's dulcimer history for your timeline. He's released 18 dulcimer based albums, including 7 award winning CDs for children.

Something we neglected to mention in the timeline is that in the late 60s JR

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Stone of Boone, North Carolina, who builds Rick's dulcimers, taught Rick to build them and for many years into the 70s he had a dulcimer building workshop in downtown Vancouver. Every so often one of those dulcimers comes back to us, with or without its player, and we always rejoice to see it.
Valley Hennell (Mrs. Rick). Canada

Keep those hammered dulcimer articles coming. I particularly appreciated the one about making hammers—my husband is now creating some for me!
Ruth Geraci, AL

Editor's Note: We are extremely grateful to Bob Bedard for being so willing to share his hammer making techniques and allowing us to video the process. His videos are accessible through the downloads link at www.dpnews.com

I'm close to my 73rd birthday and have always had a love for music. I have my daughter's fretted dulcimer and bought my sister's hammered dulcimer. Not a lot of teachers for these instruments in the San Diego area so I'm trying to learn on my own. I "jam with" Frustrated Fritters twice a month and love it! Using the internet and instruction CDs, I limp along practicing at least two hours a day.
Barbara Lucas, CA

Editor's Note: Hey, teachers. I hope you're noticing this. We get many requests for teacher information and always send people to EverythingDulcimer.com where we maintain an extensive directory of teachers and clubs.

I enjoy your magazine very much. I would like more about DAA tuning. Thank you.
Naomi Fohner, PA

Editor's Note: You'll enjoy Stephen Seifert's article on page 37. Also, be sure to read the reprint of David Schnaufer's article on Harris picking found on page 30.

I really enjoy the music CD, articles on selected topics, and vendor ads and events.
J. Cummings, FL

When I decided to purchase a hammered dulcimer I did some research and went with Masterworks. I ordered the Russell Cook special edition 16/16c with rosewood low-sustain bridges. After playing the instrument for a couple of months, I was not totally happy with the sound.

The sympathetic tones aroused by the hammered strings created more background tones than I wanted, at times competing with the tones made by the strings hammered. I sent my instrument back to Masterworks, and Russell Cook was extremely gracious and helpful in talking with me. We decided on trying the low-sustain cherry bridges.

I am totally delighted now. The instrument has a beautiful rich tone, clear, bright, very dynamic and even all across the range from high to low. But the term low-sustain is somewhat of a misnomer. It is not that the cherry bridges shorten the length of sustain of the note struck or decay faster. Rather, they diminish the level of arousal of sympathetic tones of the other strings, allowing the notes struck to stand out more.

The level of sustain remains quite adequate and the result is the beautiful dulcimer sound we all have come to love. The point then is that the wood choice for the bridges can make a significant difference.
Mike Brown, MO

Editor's Note: Your experience brings up a point I'm afraid often gets lost in arguments about sustain. Rather than arguing length of sustain, shouldn't we be considering the tone quality and color (timbre) of the sustain? What we lump under the category of sustain is actually a combination of:

- *Attack—how quickly the sound reaches full volume. This is immediate on hammered dulcimers.*
- *Decay—the time it takes for the sound to settle to the sustain level after the peak of the attack. This varies from instrument to instrument and is often what people are reacting to when they refer to a hammered dulcimer on an imaginary scale that runs from banjo to piano like.*
- *Sustain—the constant volume of the vibrating note. This is where the physics of wood choices, structure, and the luthier's experience and intentions get heard as timbre.*
- *Release—how long after the note is struck until it stops ringing.*

I am not a builder, but I love hammered dulcimers and am blessed to own several good ones built by various luthiers. All of my larger instruments have dampers and rich, long release times. If they didn't have dampers, I might be inclined to think their release times were too long. Perhaps the discussion should be why more large, great sounding dulcimers, don't have dampers? I know that not everyone wants the added weight, or expense, of dampers. I just wanted to point out that a great sounding instrument CAN have rich sustain with a lengthy release time. Dampers give the instrument the best of both worlds, and also make hammered dulcimers more jam friendly. Whether you agree or disagree, I'd love to hear what other players think about this subject. Write us.—Dan

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by Dan Landrum

Most Problems Are Just Opportunities In Disguise

Will Dulcimer Players News still exist 10 years from now? It's a question we, along with all publishers large and small, are asking these days. The topic may sound like just a lot of shop talk, but it effects us all. Whether your place in the dulcimer community is as a hobbyist, luthier, shop keeper or performer, we all have to come to grips with a rapidly changing marketplace.

For most businesses, the internet is an opportunity, disguised as a problem. Reading, research, and shopping habits have shifted dramatically to electronic resources. This is especially true in younger demographics.

I know there's a large portion of our readership that doesn't care a whit about the internet. I treasure these readers, who are usually, though not always, in the golden years of life. This group deserves more than to be simply abandoned for newer technology and younger audiences. This has been part of the struggle in the magazine industry—how to attract new readers, while still satisfying older readers who are used to a certain look and feel in their favorite publications.

Golden Subscribers

Take a look at this quarter's Letters on the previous page and you'll see that many of these older readers are actually brand new dulcimer players. They very much appreciate the role DPN plays in their lives now that they've found time to kick back and play some music. I recognize the responsibility that we have to these readers and carefully consider their needs in all our decisions regarding web versus print content. As these folks share their collective life and musical wisdom, they also lead the way in buying instruments, accessories, CDs, instruction books, and attending festivals. The challenge before us now is keeping these readers happy, while recognizing and adopting strategies that attract new subscribers. We've been heavily involved in researching these new strategies for quite some time now, and we're not alone.

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In a recent conference sponsored by Magazine Publishers of America, a room full of editors speculated that 50 percent of all magazines will not exist ten years from now, either in print OR web form. Paul Maidment, editor, Forbes Magazine, cited the culprit as a failure to grasp the idea that journalism must be delivered in a way the audience wants. The panel also noted that magazines fail when they don't recognize the paradigm shift—and do something about it—early.

Now that we're a few years into this paradigm shift we have a pretty good idea what doesn't work. For instance, a few magazines threw all their resources too quickly on the internet bandwagon, moving all their content to the web, charging subscription fees, and waiting for the dough to roll in. It didn't. The predictions of a paperless society were incorrect.

Reading In Bed

Most readers still like to hold books and magazines in their hands and read them when, and where, they want. However, many of these same readers split their discretionary reading time between paper and electronic sources. This transitional period is especially challenging for niche market publishers like Dulcimer Players News. Slim budgets and tiny staffs don't leave much room for luxuries like market research and web development. So, we read and discuss, and read some more, all the while trying to come up with a strategy, not just to survive, but to thrive in this new economy with its new opportunities.

Before I introduce you to our plan, I want to reiterate why I feel it is worth the work, monetary investment, time, and risk for us to publish a content rich magazine AND web site.

This is Personal

I would never have guessed, 21 years ago when I played my first dulcimer, that I would become so immersed in this hobby. I would have laughed at anyone who told me it would one day be my career! Today, it seems like this *path less traveled* was a simple matter of following the path of least resistance. I love playing dulcimers. I love the people I've met along the way. I love the crazy opportunities to travel and perform that have presented themselves. I am thankful for my fortunate circumstances and take seriously my responsibility to the dulcimer community as the publisher of this magazine. I am doubly thankful that Madeline MacNeil trusted Angie and me enough to hand us the reigns.

Dulcimer Players News plays a key role in the evolving tradition of regular folk making music with easily accessible instruments. It also enhances our lives and promotes our products, while connecting teachers with students, buyers with sellers, and strangers with new friends. DPN is valuable to the dulcimer community because it contains valuable content. I feel a profound sense of duty in continuing this important work. I want to make sure you know that we're in healthy shape right now, and our subscriber rolls have either grown, or held their ground each quarter over the last couple of years. This is great news in light of industry trends and the current economy. However, standing still now is not a healthy option, as our cost of doing business, just like everyone else's, is steadily increasing and more and more advertising dollars are being spent to reach audiences on the web.

A winning strategy for DPN means developing a content rich website that will provide a logical meeting place for buyer and seller.

Defining The Strategy

DPN has had a web presence for quite a while. Most of our new subscriptions already come through the web site. Up until now though, the ability to subscribe was really all we had to offer. Our goal has been to add the following services:

- Vibrant online social community
- Access to DPN archives
- Club, festival, event, and teacher listings
- Number one Google search ranking
- A Dulcipedia

We considered creating all of this from scratch but decided it would be better and more beneficial to the community to simply join forces with EverythingDulcimer.com, which was started by Bruce Ford in 2001.

This marriage of EverythingDulcimer.com and Dulcimer Players News creates a slew of new opportunities (disguised as work) and helps divide the work load. I'll let Bruce explain it from his perspective:

Bruce Ford

"Everything Dulcimer has seen a constant and rapid expansion of content and features. It has essentially outrun me, and my work demand dictates that I don't have time to keep up this level of maintenance. There are so many things I want to do with the site, but can't find the time to make them happen. This is initially why I thought DPN might be better suited to managing the growth of Everything Dulcimer. I'm not stepping out of the picture, I actually hope to be more involved in the day to

"Fifty percent of all magazines will not exist in ten years."

"Standing still now is not a healthy option."

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day conversations and answering new user's questions and the like. I'll still be producing the Everything Dulcimer monthly newsletter which you can sign up for on the site.

Dan Landrum and Stephen Seifert have joined me in managing site development. This seems like a natural team solution, since Dan was looking for a way to present many years worth of DPN material, and Stephen brings years of web development skills, along with a newfound knowledge that he's more productive in a structured working environment. Since Everything Dulcimer already claims the number one Google search rank position, all of this should be a big boost to DPN's web presence. I believe this is good for all of us.

It has been fun watching this idea evolve, and I think it is hard to imagine a better fit when you combine the weight and momentum of DPN, Everything Dulcimer's web share, and Steve and Dan's connectedness in the dulcimer community."

Scanning The Future

With the agreement in hand to combine Everything Dulcimer and Dulcimer Players News, it was time to get to work. Our largest immediate task was converting old magazine content to a format presentable and searchable on the web. This is tedious work. Several people have spent many hours scanning magazines, but a special thanks goes to Sharon Gartley who led the way.

(continues on page 10)

Reprinted from Dulcimer Players News Volume 5, no. 4, Fall 1979

Harris Picking

..david schnaufer

In the Fall of 1977, my friend Rodger Harris from Oklahoma City, author of NOTES ON DULCIMER MAKING (Bois D'Arc Publications) visited me in Texas and enlightened me to a dulcimer technique that has opened up a new range of sound color on the instrument. I refer to it now as "Harris picking", as he is the leading proponent of the style and I have never seen anyone from the East Coast to the West who has used it before. At the 1978 National Dulcimer Championship in Winfield, Kansas, he took third place with a most beautiful rendition of "Starr of the County Down" in this unique style.

Prior to his visit I had been listening to the Chieftain's albums and Derek Bell's harp playing was a focal point. I was trying to play this harp music on my dulcimer, but was ending up with too many slides and movements on the melody strings that detracted from the single note punctuality of the harp's sound. Rodger changed all of that in a matter of minutes.

This three finger picking technique works only if you are tuned to where the melody string(s) and middle string are tuned to the same note, such as in DAA Ionian and EAA Mixolydian or any of the four separate string tunings such as DADD Mixolydian or EBAA Dorian ("Starr of the County Down"). Instead of playing ascending or descending scales on the melody string alone and sliding to the next note up or down, you use the melody and middle string(s) alternately, fretted one space apart so you keep a plucked single note sound going.

Following is an exercise that will take you up and down the scale. Start slowly to get the feel of what's happening, then work up your speed. Once you've gotten the exercise down, try my version of "White Cockade" which is based on this technique. Other tunes I play in this style are "South Wind" and "Morgan Magan". I'm sure there are many other tunes which will take on a very special character when Harris-picked.

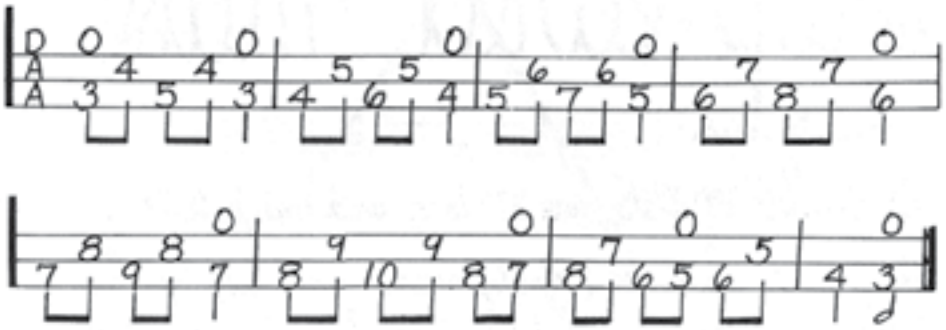
David Schnaufer
Boulder, Colorado

HARRIS PICKING FINGER EXERCISE

Tune: Do Sol Sol
D A A Ionian

by David Schnaufer

Meter: 3/4



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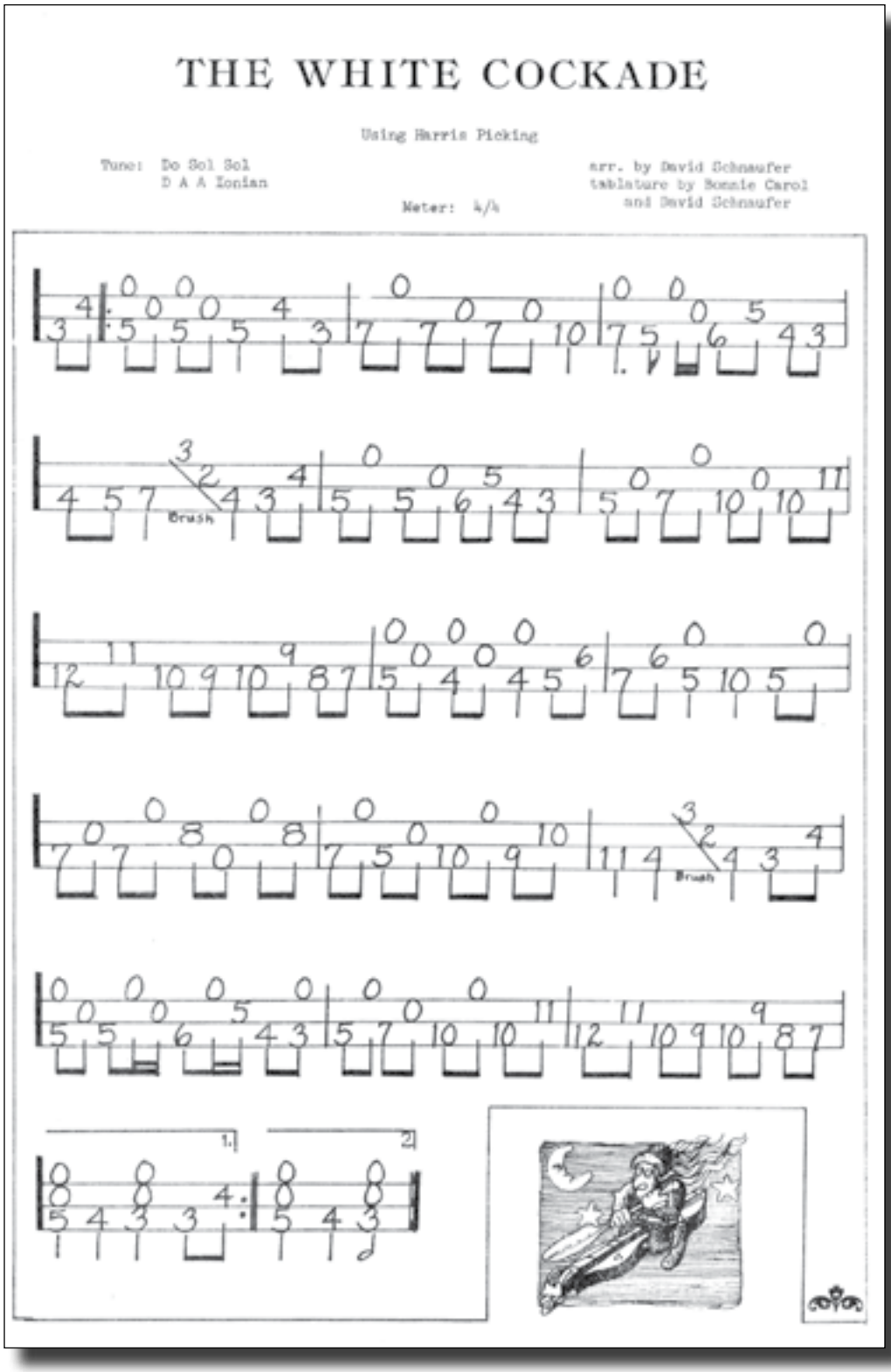

THE WHITE COCKADE

Using Harris Picking

Tune: Do Sol Sol
D A A Ionian

Meter: 4/4

arr. by David Schnaufer
tablature by Bonnie Carol
and David Schnaufer

The article and music to the left were written in 1979 by David Schnaufer. These are good examples of quality stories hiding in the archives at Everything Dulcimer. These pages were chosen because they support the new **Rethinking DAA** article, written by Stephen Seifert, on page 36 of this issue.

You'll find the scan of another article, this one written by Jerry Rockwell in 1978, on the next page. The samples I've provided here are for mountain dulcimer, but the archives are populated with a great balance of hammered and fretted dulcimer articles.

It is these kinds of references that demonstrate the value of the DPN archives. Just about any dulcimer related topic you are researching has probably had an authoritative article written about it. Accurate transcriptions will make it much easier to gather articles by subject.

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Dulcimer Players News

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Over 30 Years of Dulcimer History at your Fingertips

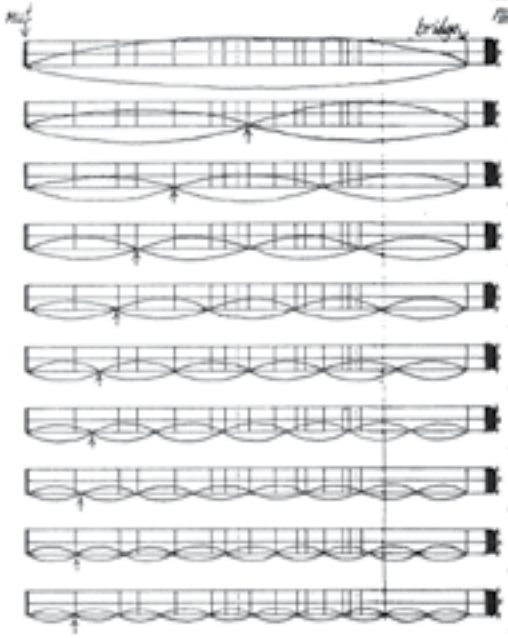
Reprinted from Dulcimer Players News Volume 4, no. 4, Fall 1978

Harmonics

Jerry Rockwell

Harmonics are sounds produced on a string instrument by touching the string lightly at one of its exact fractional points or nodes. They have a soft, ethereal quality that is bell-like in comparison with the regular open or fretted strings. A string lightly touched at its midpoint will produce a pitch that is one octave higher than the open string. This is the 2nd Partial and its node is found at the 7th fret of the dulcimer. By lightly touching the string here we are causing the string to vibrate in two equal segments or "footballs." By touching at the 1/3 point or node (4th fret), we get the 3rd Partial – three vibrating segments or "footballs" – producing a pitch a fifth higher than the 2nd Partial.

Now, by using the following chart, we'll play the harmonic series on the 1st or melody string (tuned to C) in order by dividing the string up into ever-finer segments. Touch the string at its node with the left forefinger very lightly, then pluck the string with the right thumb or a pick.



Partial number	String division	Note or Pitch	Effective Node location (shown by arrow)
1	1	c	———
2	1/2	c'	7th fret
3	1/3	g'	4th fret
4	1/4	c''	3rd fret
5	1/5	e''	slightly behind 2nd fret
6	1/6	g''	a little more than halfway between frets 1 and 2
7	1/7	*-b♭''	one third of the way between frets 1 and 2
8	1/8	c'''	about ½ inch ahead of the first fret
9	1/9	d'''	just a hair ahead of the first fret
10	1/10	e'''	just a hair behind the first fret

* somewhat lower than an equal-tempered B-flat

Of course, there are many more harmonics or partials than I have described here. Theoretically a string may be divided up into an infinitely large number of segments, giving an infinity of harmonics. I have given the first node from the nut for each partial. In some cases, touching at the other nodes will produce the partial in question. This is not easy - especially for the higher partials. HAVE PATIENCE!! "Fish" for the exact location of the nodes. I would love to hear from anyone who's into the harmonic series and its implications in creative instrument building.

Jerry Rockwell
33 Buell Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401

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Laurel Schwartz ☆ Lucy Joan Sollogub ☆ Tim Van Egmond
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When we complete the project, we'll have over 30 years worth of searchable magazines available online. We ultimately want every article to be searchable, word for word. We had high hopes that modern optical character recognition software (OCR) would automate this process, but the results are spotty. It looks like we may have to transcribe each article manually to truly reach our goal. As you can imagine, this is a huge undertaking and we are definitely looking for volunteers who would be willing to help. You can learn more about this project at www.everythingdulcimer.com and sign up to transcribe as many, or as few, articles as you'd like.

Protecting Subscriptions

Niche market magazines (you can't get much nichier than catering only to dulcimer players) can't afford to just give away their work. All Everything Dulcimer content will remain free, but we are well aware of the fact that without Dulcimer Players News magazine, there would be no online archives. To protect the value of DPN subscriptions, we will only offer sample content from the most recent magazines.

Paying For It

Digital distribution is certainly cost effective, but it isn't cost free. Our startup costs are already into the thousands of dollars without factoring in the value for even a second of my own time.

We hope to recoup some of the expense by offering advertising packages that include web and print exposure. We also are betting that the increased web exposure for Dulcimer Players News will result in more subscribers, which in turn is good for advertisers. As I said earlier, it is a plan that is not without risk, but it would be riskier to have no plan at all.

Let's Talk About It

Day to day life at Everything Dulcimer centers around discussion groups. The mood and topics in these forums are similar to what you find at festivals—and for good reason—the 3 thousand or so registered members ARE the people you meet at festivals. They discuss everything dulcimer related and have accumulated over two hundred thousand replies to thousands of topics. It is a friendly and vibrant community, again, just like you find at dulcimer festivals. Bruce Ford does a tremendous job of making sure no nefarious people sneak in and spoil the fun. The daily participants appreciate this, as it was expressed in this recent post:

> *"I've got to tell you that this is perhaps the most civil and friendly forum I have been in. Everyone tries to be respectful from what I've seen and read. We're all just human beings and misunderstandings can and will occur, but it seems to me that this particular forum kind of avoids rudeness, etc. Maybe it's the nature of the instrument that this forum revolves around. I find dulcimer music to be primarily a gentle genre of "folk," one way or another. I'm a member of several guitar forums and in all honesty, they are far different from the gentle and warm attitude displayed in here. What I see in here is people going out-of-their-way to get-along with others. That doesn't happen as much in other forums. There are nasty disagreements over what guitar is better, which one is louder, has more bass, better wood, better finish, and on and on. I just don't see that kind of arguing in this forum. . . .all things considered, you folks in here have a warm and friendly atmosphere that most other forums never even get close to."*

"This is perhaps the most civil and friendly forum I have been in."

Dulcipedia

Everything Dulcimer already has a great system for tracking upcoming festivals, concerts, club meetings, and such, but what about chronicling those same happenings? The best tool for this job is a collaborative encyclopedia we're calling Dulcipedia. This wiki-based* knowledge gathering tool actively involves registered users in an ongoing process of preserving the history, knowledge, and wisdom of all people, places, and things dulcimer. **(To learn more about Wiki's go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki, or I recommend reading the book,* ***The Long Tail****, by Chris Anderson)*

A few features of Dulcipedia include:

- Entries that are easily created, edited, browsed, searched, and discussed.
- There is no review before new additions are accepted and integrated. Rather than making it difficult to make mistakes, Dulcipedia makes it easy to correct them.
- Users can comment on and change one another's submissions. A complete log of changes since the beginning accompanies every entry.
- Differing opinions are welcome. Dulcipedia wants to avoid catering to just one side of the story. Each entry includes a dedicated discussion.
- Some pages will display related entries. For example, one page would list all known dulcimer builders. Clicking on a builder's name would take you to that person's entry. The same builder may be found on a page that lists well-known noter-style players.

What will be included?

- Memorials
- Builders
- Styles
- Tunes
- Clubs
- Performers
- Favorite Books
- Events
- DPN Time Line Entries

This Editor's Column has gone on way too long already, though it feels like I've

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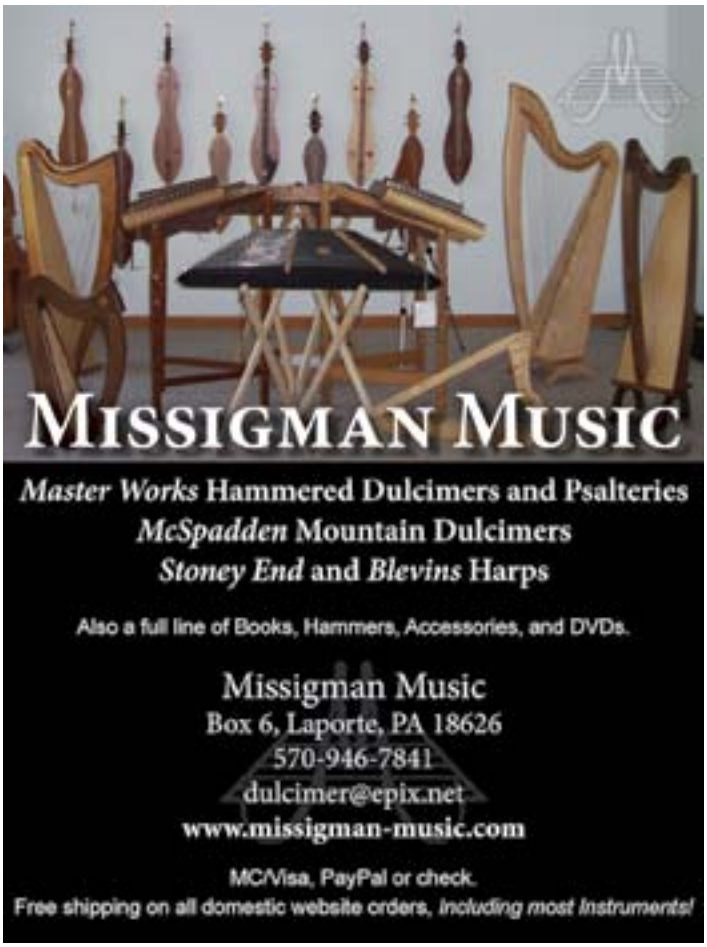

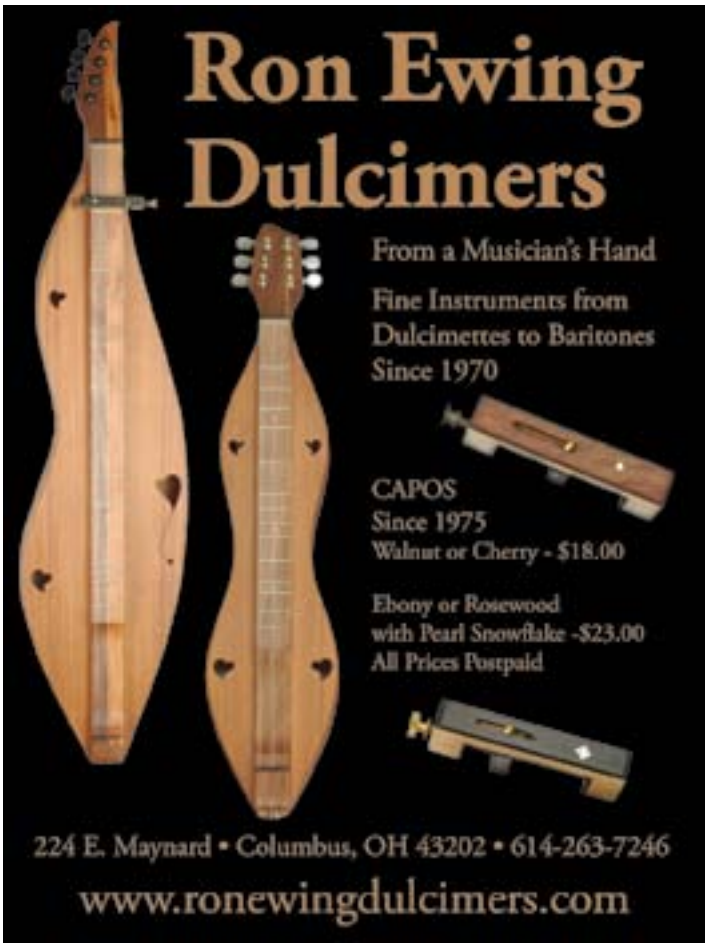

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only just scratched the surface of what can be done with the Everything Dulcimer/Dulcimer Players News partnership. Much of the work has already been done, but much more lies ahead and there's plenty to spread around. If you're willing to help, have decent typing skills, and have an internet connection, we can probably find a way for you to be involved.

Time Line Deadline

In closing I want to gently prod those of you who haven't submitted your time line entries. The numbers of folks sending in their stories means we definitely have enough participation for a great fall issue, but we don't want to leave anyone out unnecessarily. Your assignment is simple—we want to know when, why, how, and where you started playing a dulcimer. What, or who, influenced you? We've included a questionnaire on the card between pages 40 and 41 of this issue. There is also a simple and more thorough version of this at www.dpnews.com.

I hope you'll take the time to answer the questions and help us trace our modern dulcimer history. To show you how easy it is, I've included a few excerpts below from time line submissions we've received. - Dan

Patsy Jordan - In the early '70s I took my pre-school age son to a Saturday music festival at the Kennedy Center and we saw a group of four young men playing hammered dulcimers—an instrument I had never heard of. The group was Trapezoid. I was totally enthralled and vowed that one day I was going to learn to play one. Over the next 25 years or so I searched out every hammered dulcimer event I could find and finally in 1997 when I retired from teaching, my children gave me my first HD. I have been happily and enthusiastically hammering away ever since.

Jim Miller - I saw my first hammered dulcimer at the Folk Festival of the Smokies in Cosby, TN in 1974 or 1975. It was played by Frank George. I followed him around like a puppy all weekend trying to learn more about it. I built my first instrument in 1979 from plans obtained from the Smithsonian written by Sam Rizzetta.

Clayton Bulice - In 1999 my family and I were visiting Mt. View, Arkansas. We stopped in the Dulcimer Shoppe just to see what was there. There was a lovely gazebo in which hung several mountain dulcimers and people were taking them off the wall and playing them like it was a jam session. A lady (I now know as Jean Jennings) came up and asked if I wanted to play. I told her, "I can't play. I can barely play a recorder." She insisted, "sure, anyone can play a dulcimer. Let me show you." Within 10 minutes she had taught me how to "Boil Them Cabbage" and I was so excited.

Peggy Spofford - In 1976, I and my family attended a folk concert at the Adirondack Center for the Arts in Blue Mt. Lake, NY. Sandy and Caroline Paton performed. For a few of the tunes, Caroline played the Appalachian mountain dulcimer. I was smitten. They ordered one for $75 from Sugar Grove, NC. I bought a few Jean Ritchie books and "In Search of the Wild Dulcimer". I picked at the dulcimer, but being a full time school teacher, volleyball referee and mother of three, I never seemed to have enough time to 'conquer' it. In 1998, I attended the Cranberry Dulcimer Festival in Binghamton, NY and purchased a Blue Lion thinking that if I spent enough money on one I would surely learn. But newly retired and moving from the Ithaca, NY area to AZ, I again put both of them in the closet. In 2003, I needed a New Year's resolution ... ahhh, learn to play the dulcimer.

Mark Richardson - I think the first time was seeing Joni Mitchell at the Berkeley High School auditorium doing tunes from her Blue Album.. or, It may have been meeting Michael Rugg and Neil Hellman at the first "Dickens Fair" in San Francisco's Cannery building.. either way, around 1970-72 time era. Not sure what was first.. You know those 60's in San Francisco days... I went out and bought a dulcimer or two.

Linda Smith - My husband & I were at the Fall Festival at Dollywood (Pigeon Forge, TN) in October, 2001, where there was a man selling dulcimers. He demonstrated how easy they were to play and I made the comment that they looked easy enough for even me, who had no musical background, to play. My husband remembered that and surprised me that Christmas with a dulcimer! My first thought was "Oh no, now I have to learn how to play it!" Started that day and haven't looked back!

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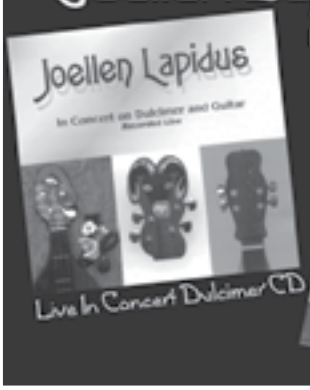

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Your 1st Album

CONSIDERATIONS

Before, During, & After

Hitting the RECORD Button

BY MARK ALAN WADE

Here is the typical scenario: You are starting to do a lot of gigs—paying your dues in civic club meetings, folk festivals, and other small venues. You get good at answering the inevitable question, "What do you call that thing?" In time, you start getting a second common question: "Do you have any CDs?" It doesn't take a genius to realize that if you did, you could start turning your $75 dollar gigs into real money-makers by having product to sell. It's at this point you start thinking seriously about recording a CD. Here are some things to consider before, during, and after the process to save you time, money, and stress.

BEFORE

Step Away from the Microphone! Like all worthwhile projects in music, most of the thought and effort needs to happen before you are anywhere near a microphone. Today anyone can record a CD to self publish and sell. This is both a blessing and a curse. You owe it to yourself, and to your audience, to set high standards for your project. Think a little more like an artist than an accountant. I'm not suggesting that you be unrealistic with your budget. Rather than extending your budget, consider extending your timeline. Your final product will be better if you take your time to do your very best—even if that means you only record one song every two months. Take even more stress off by not setting a release date or release concert until the CDs are ready for duplication. Putting any time limits on your project will only give you headaches and could cause you to cut corners.

So now, with your highest artistic standards set, pockets deep, and time set aside, you can focus on the music itself. Generally speaking, when people ask you if you have a CD, they want to buy what they just heard. So what are you playing out in your performances? Recording these tunes will not only help your sales, but will also make the recording itself go more smoothly. Some of the best recordings capture the music naturally played by the performer sounding both fresh and like they have played it a hundred times before. This is the big secret—play it a hundred times before! Don't feel like you need to reinvent yourself in the recording studio. Take your play list out and gig on it live for a year or so until it becomes second nature to you. Sometimes the best practicing cannot replace the intimate knowledge of a piece achieved by playing it out for a very long time. Most people do this backwards. If you follow this advice, the recording session itself will make you less nervous. When the time comes and you are in the recording booth with live microphones, you will have a much easier time playing through the pieces in a natural way, like a conversation between old friends.

Now the question remains: Which pieces do you keep from your set lists for the recording? It depends. Where do you imagine you will sell your CDs—after your concerts, in gift shops in the Smoky Mountains, street performing in subway stations? The CDs that sell the best in gift shops and tend to play as background music in coffee shops, for example, tend to have one consistent mood and "feel" throughout and have no vocals. There will still be a mix of meters among the pieces, like adding an occasional waltz, but the overall style and groove will be homogeneous. If you do not see yourself doing a lot of wholesales to retail shops, perhaps a CD with a wider variety is best for you. After all, this is the 21st century and it is entirely possible to place your recording online where your audience can download individual tracks and never own the entire CD, making the need for a homogeneous mood throughout the CD obsolete. These projects often sell best after concerts presumably because your live performances have greater variety and you are not trying to be background music. This type of project can have a wider spectrum of styles, tempi, and instrumentation because it is representative of your set list that the consumer just heard as an audience member. Just make sure you choose to record pieces that you can actually play live. You don't want to have a great recording that doesn't sell because you don't have the means or musicians to pull it off live.

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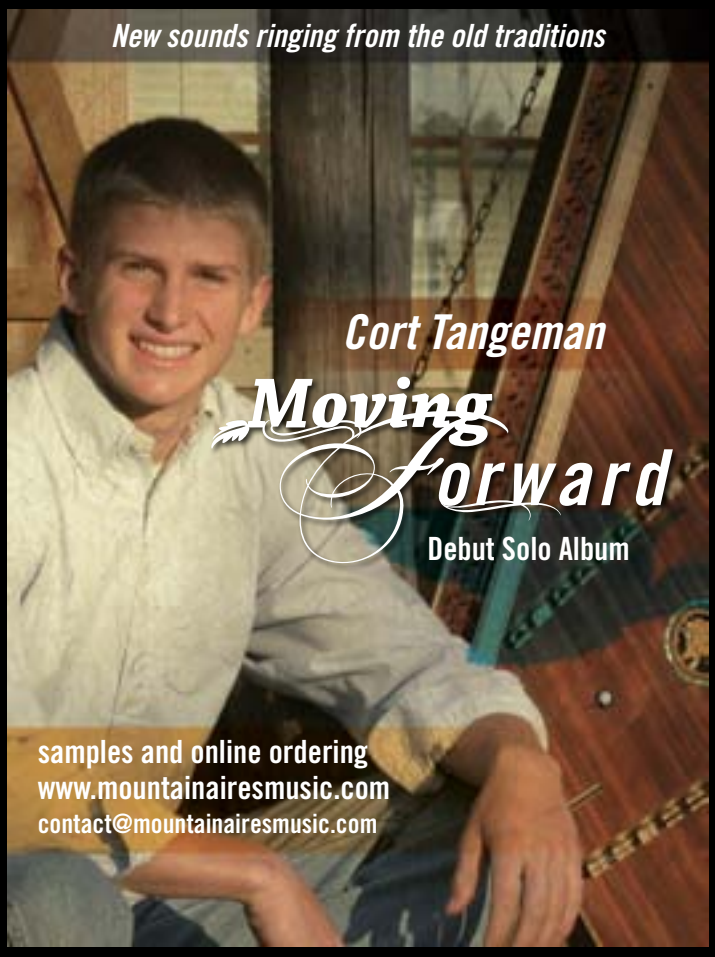

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This instrument was recently purchased by Aaron Miller - *". . . it is perhaps one of the greatest things that has happened to me. It is amazing! The tone is great. When I play it, it feels like part of me—it sounds really cheesy but I don't know how else to describe it. This instrument is so unique that I think if people see it and hear it, it will make a huge impact on them. I can't thank you enough. You, sir, are a genius."* Aaron M.

Now that you have selected your repertoire for the recording, it is time to practice! It bears repeating that you need to play these songs live as many times as possible both to become even more familiar with them and to practice playing them under pressure.

DURING: DRESS REHEARSAL

A great recording begins by recording yourself. Any kind of recorder will do—even a hand held voice recorder. Just record yourself as if it is a live recording in a studio, and pretend you have only one take to get it right. In reality you can record as many takes as you would like, but think of this free time as if you were paying by the hour. Practice making the first time the charm. If you can master this, you will save money and add a certain focus and mental discipline to your playing. It will also make you a better performer, both live and in the studio, and save you money in the process. Recording yourself will also help you hear things in your playing that you never knew were there. It is truly shocking how much you can hear when you are detached from the live performance and can listen critically. The recording will tell on you. While you will be humbled by the warts you hear in your playing, isn't it better to discover those rough spots when you are not on the clock in a recording studio? Listen critically and then practice purposefully to address those weaknesses.

Here is a checklist for your self-recording practice sessions:

1. How is your tempo? Are you rushing?
2. Can you play with a metronome?
3. How is your tuning? No really—how is your tuning?
4. How is your accuracy? What strings are you consistently missing? Isolate that lick in your practice.
5. How is your execution? Did you remember to play all of the intricacies of the arrangement that you meant to play?
6. Did you remember to sit motionless for 10 seconds after the last note? Forget this and you can ruin an otherwise perfect take.
7. How is the arrangement? Is it going anywhere or does it need some brainstorming to give it direction, like a key change, an intro/outro, etc.?
8. How is your musical expression? Are you simply going through the motions because you are nervous around a live microphone or are you really taking time in poignant moments to let the music breathe and bring the music to life? Guard against simply executing notes and rhythms like a machine. What is your dynamic spectrum? Forget about the amount of work you put into the arrangement and hear it as if you were hearing it for the first time. Is it too much or too little?
9. Amidst the embellishments of your personal style, do you have a discernible melody? If so, is it consistently louder than the other filler notes? After all, this is collectively our biggest critique as dulcimer players.

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You will learn more from these self-recordings than from a summer's worth of workshops. Be honest with yourself if you learn through this process that you need to postpone your project. It is still a no-lose endeavor: you will become a much more mature musician for it, your CD recording will be a much stronger final product, and you will save a lot of money by working out the kinks in your playing before you are paying by the hour to hear the same mistakes you could have addressed at home. This is why it is best to do all this work before you schedule any recording time with a studio.

A final musical consideration before you begin recording is to determine what and who your accompaniment will be. On the one hand, using the friends with whom you typically play will make you more comfortable in the studio, they will know the arrangements from experience with the pieces, and they will probably not charge you the union rate for recording. Depending on their level of musicianship, this may be a good choice for you. However, you may need to consider hiring professionals for the recording. Even though you will have to pay for their services, you will likely save money overall because a good studio musician can record a perfect track in one cut. A friend, who may not charge you, might need over fifty takes to get a part right. It could cost you much more in billable studio hours, and still may not sound as good as a professional musician. If you go with a professional, get them a recording of your band playing the piece and a clear chart to follow and then continue to play with your friends when you take the CD out to sell live in concerts. Business is business here.

Your next assignment is to determine your budget. It can take hours of studio time to record one minute of final product. A 45 minute CD, for example, at a studio that charges $65+ an hour can easily exceed 3 thousand dollars in recording time alone, even if you are well practiced for the recording sessions. Add in about $100 a song for any professionals you hire, remembering that the alternative of using a non-professional will potentially cost you more. Remember you'll have to pay royalty fees for any copyrighted songs used: these fees run from about 8 to 12 cents per unit sold ($80 per piece for 1000 CDs). Next, figure in the cost of photography, the licensing for those photos, and hiring a graphic artist to design the covers and layout of the CD and insert. Sometimes CD manufacturers will offer package deals for the graphics and CD duplication that may be worthwhile. Get prices on the packaging options, too. The cost will be determined by several factors: the number of colors needed in the printing, how many copies, how many folded pages of the inserts, what kind of printing you would like on the actual CD itself, choice of traditional clear plastic CD jewel cases or the cardboard cases that have become popular. Finally, the CD duplication and shipping costs should be added to the budget. If possible, find a CD manufacturer within driving distance and save a couple hundred dollars for shipping a thousand CDs. The duplication costs are determined by some choices in your control, specifically the printing on the CD disk itself. Shop around and find the best price.

Next, you need to find a good recording studio. There are a lot of them out there, but few have experience with recording acoustic instruments, especially mountain or hammered dulcimer. My best advice is to listen to a lot of dulcimer recordings and get the contact information of the recording studios from the CD jackets of the recordings that have the best sounding dulcimer recorded. You may save money by using a local recording studio, but if they only have experience recording garage bands and electric guitars, you may be best served by driving a little further to a dulcimer specialist. Find out their hourly rate and what they consider billable hours. Will you be charged on the clock for the time spent setting up your instrument, waiting for it to acclimate to the room's temperature and tuning for 45 minutes in their studio? That is the Nashville norm, but not always the case. Find out ahead of time. Ask about the projects each studio has recorded in the last year to gauge their experience with traditional instruments. Find out what kind of microphones they will use and what kind of editing they can do. Some recording studios still use analogue tape which limits your editing options. Most are digital and done on computers, allowing for much more editing in post production. Offer to let the recording engineer listen to a recording you think represents what you'd like your CD to sound like. Ask them how they would go about reproducing that sound.

DURING: RECORDING

Tune and Try Again!

While you are in the midst of the recording process, you can work on other details. This is a good time to have current photos taken and write the liner notes. Give the graphic artist many more photos than will be needed. Get a variety of posed shots and shots of live performances but make sure to work out an agreement with the photographer for licensing ahead of time. Use this time to shop for CD duplicators and begin brainstorming with your graphic artist for the layout. Many projects are postponed because of the artwork—not the music.

In each recording session, take your time while tuning. Be very critical here. A poorly tuned instrument ruins many CDs published. You simply must tune and retune and retune again! Tune both sides of the treble bridge and recheck tuning after nearly every take. Once your ears get accustomed to hearing a perfectly tuned instrument, you will appreciate the effort even more. The recording will sound out of tune each time it is played—forever and ever. It is worth the time and money.

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You can also take care of any royalties for copyrighted songs during the recording process between sessions. You will need this documentation before CD duplication can begin. The easiest way to do this is to visit: harryfox.com and click on "licensing." It's actually really easy to do. You will need a mechanical license for each song that is copyrighted. This gives you the right to record, duplicate, and perform each copyrighted song licensed.

AFTER

As the project nears completion, you must apply for a vendor's license. Most dulcimer players get a transient vendor's license that is good anywhere in your state. This allows you to sell your CDs in every county and city within your state. If you plan to sell anything out of state, check with each state's auditor's office. Usually, you must sell a certain amount before you are required to obtain a vendor's license for that state. You will need to pay sales tax either monthly, quarterly or biannually, depending on your state and how much you are making in sales. Every performer I know charges an even $15 at the point of sale including tax. This way we do not have to make change while signing autographs! When it is time to pay sales tax, we have to work backwards a bit to avoid paying sales tax on sales tax, meaning on the full $15 (which already includes the sales tax). This is actually easy to do and even easier to set up in a spreadsheet to figure for you. For instance, where I live, a $15 CD sale is actually $14.05 NET profit for the sale of the CD and $.95 in taxes due at 6.75% sales tax.

Once you have your vendor's license, this is also a good time to set up your website to promote your CD and enable web sales. Of course, the most important thing to do next is to submit your ad to DPN to make the next issue to get your ad out to our target audience! Once the sales start pouring in, invest in some bubble wrap CD mailers. These are the lightest and least expensive option. A bulk supplier, such as U-line.com, can cut your costs significantly.

Though the recording process may seem overwhelming at first, the benefits of doing your homework before beginning the recording are innumerable. Ultimately, you should find the process extremely rewarding. After all, you are helping to keep our music alive through your own fresh interpretation!

Mark Alan Wade, who is seriously thinking about making his next recording in the fall, but needs much practice first, lives in Columbus, OH and is an Assistant Professor of Music at Denison University where he is now happily on summer break!

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TAKING IT TO THE STUDIO WITH NEAL AND COLLEEN

Neal and Coleen Walters have recorded over 70 projects in their studio, ***Basement Music,*** *since opening it in 2000. Many of these projects have involved dulcimers. DPN asked them to share some insights into taking your dulcimer into a recording studio:*

DPN - Coming to a recording studio for the first time can be fun, but it can also be an intimidating ordeal. How do you help your clients prepare?

Neal - There's no need to be intimidated. Folks coming in that haven't recorded before are often surprised by some of the things you can do to make the process easier. The biggest fear is that they'll have to play everything perfectly, and if they don't, they'll have to try again and again. The truth is, there are so many ways to correct errors now with the software used in modern studios, it is easier than you think. Sometimes recutting the part is the easiest and best choice, but, since most recordings are done digitally these days, there's no wasted tape. It is just a simple matter of playing it again.

Coleen - Just the fact that they are recording makes some people nervous. They also may not fully understand what they've gotten into, but once they've done a couple of songs, they usually settle down.

Neal - The first tune takes the longest as you work through a mutual agreement on an approach with a client. I offer suggestions, but they have to be comfortable. For instance, some folks can't sing without playing, some can't play cleanly while singing, or perhaps both are true. We just have to figure it out for each client. This process helps people relax and builds the sense of a partnership in the recording process.

DPN - There are so many options these days for recording yourself at home. What advice do you have for someone on the fence regarding a home project vs. a more costly studio project?

Neal - Many musicians who have great technical skills find it virtually impossible to be the performer and engineer at the same time. Even when they own a first class studio. If I'm sitting here by myself and trying to make a recording of myself, it is just hard. Operating the gear and being a musician are two different things. There's very little chance that you're going to play as well as you can if you're doing both. I'm not saying it can't be done. It is a skill that can be learned, but it isn't as simple as buying some gear and saying, "I'll do it myself." This is especially true for someone who doesn't already have experience in the studio. There's a lot to think about. You'll certainly want to have your music down cold to have a fighting chance.

DPN - How involved are you in the process of helping clients with their song arrangements?

Neal - I've had clients who don't know what they want until they hear it. I give them the benefit of my experience. It is better if folks come in knowing what they want to do rather than wandering around. If the client needs a little help, I can make suggestions about intro's, turnarounds, shortening breaks, etc.

DPN - Do you consider yourself to be a producer?

Neal - Yes. Very few of the folks who come in have hired an official producer. I enjoy that process as long as they are comfortable with me in that role. The more comfortable they are with me, the more candid I can be in encouraging them on to their best possible takes and arrangements.

DPN - Can you talk a little about your studio fees.

Colleen - We charge $45 a studio hour. Studio hours are hours Neal puts in at the computer, recording, mixing, working on graphics, etc. It is easy to track this time since almost all the work is done at the computer, in the studio. The truth is, we are really inexpensive when compared to studios in major markets like Nashville, Los Angeles, and Boston, and offer comparable services. No one is getting rich in the dulcimer world on either the selling or recording end of things. We want to be helpful and affordable, while at the same time keep an eye on the business side of things so we can stay in business.

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It's How to Accidentally Record a CD at Home

by Butch Ross

I never intended to record my new CD, **A Long Way from Shady Grove,** at home. My original plan was to use Dan Landrum's studio, which, despite being in his basement, is top of the line professional. We worked out an agreement to let me access the studio whenever he didn't need it, which is often, since he often travels, or stays busy working on Dulcimer Players News and a million other projects.

I wanted to include several friends on the record: Bing Futch, Quintin Stephens, Gary Gallier, Robert Force, and some others. Before heading to the studio I recorded a few demos so they could hear, roughly, how the tunes went. For these rough recordings I used a program that came with my Macintosh called Garageband—which is a digital recording program—and a Zoom H4 microphone, which I borrowed from Dan. The Zoom is designed to do a lot of things—especially field recordings—but one of it's strongest features is a set of condenser mics that come with a surprisingly high quality stereo microphone that works great on acoustic instruments.

I used a little keyboard and Garageband to lay down a bass line, then recorded guitar and dulcimer using the H4. All the files were compressed to the mp3 format so they could be emailed to the other musicians.

Gary Gallier was the first to get his parts done and emailed back to me. I loaded his recording into Garageband and made a rough mix. I headed up to Dan's to give it a listen through professional studio monitors. That first mix had sounded good enough on my consumer grade speakers and headphones, but a good set of studio monitors can bring out things you never heard before. It is better to catch bad things before you've spent a lot of money on a 1,000 or so CDs. I was also curious as to whether or not these Zoom recordings had turned out well with the cat running around, the refrigerator on, etc. I loaded the files into Dan's computer and listened. The sound was amazing, or at least way better than I

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expected. Dan walked in and heard this, too, and suggested I do the **whole thing** at home.

That's how I ended up recording the entire project.

One of the advantages of recording at home is that you can spend as much time as you want on things. You're not looking at the clock and worrying about how much this is costing you. If you need to do multiple takes to get it just right, you do multiple takes. If you want to experiment with adding music tracks to ridiculous samples of classic rock tracks, you can do that, too. At worst you'll have wasted an afternoon, or in my case discovered your new single. It's about being able to get something technically right, but also something that feels good or has an emotional resonance.

The downside of course is that you can't do everything there. If you have a house with a good quiet room you can get decent quality recordings, but you're still going to get noise from the HVAC system. I had to deal with helicopters landing at a local hospital, rain, my noisy old refrigerator, and kids driving by with the most recent Lil' Wayne CD booming out of their Impalas.

So I spent a lot of time in Dan's studio taking care to remove noises that wouldn't have existed had I not done the tracking at home. Dealing with little problems like this has a big payoff and is worth the effort. The life and comfort of your own space adds life and personality to the recordings themselves. I've recorded in some professional studios, including the Hit Factory in New York City, and I can say that the stuff I've done in low-budget, and home studios, has usually trumped the high-quality stuff when it comes to feel and emotional resonance.

Having recorded the basic tracks at home, I then took it all back to Dan's studio to be mixed. I wanted a second set of top-notch ears on the project, some outside opinions, and access to the expensive compressors and reverbs at Dan's. This gear, in the right hands, can take a good basic track recorded at home and give a professional sheen.

For someone who's going to record at home, this is a good way to do it. You can take the recorded tracks to a studio to have them mixed and then mastered, or even just mastered, I have heard terrible recordings done on cassette be transferred into amazingly clear recordings through the mastering process. Of course that kind of sonic surgery isn't cheap, so get the cleanest, best recordings you can up front.

Everything on this record was recorded digitally, which allowed me to do some pretty detailed editing, getting right down to a single wave form to fix or delete bad notes and punch in new ones. This allowed me to just "go for it" and know that if I got a take that felt great and had wonderful moments, but had one or two mistakes, I could punch in or edit out the bad bits.

Stephen Seifert and I used this editing/punch-in process as a compositional tool when were working on the tune *Simple, Short and Sweet.* I had written the tune, but thought the middle eight measures were a little uninteresting. I spiced it up by adding an electric dulcimer solo over the top of it. This was better, but still lacking. I knew Steve was going to be in town so I was able to pack up my whole *studio* and take it to where Stephen was staying. He hadn't heard the song more than once or twice, so he didn't really have a solo worked out. We took multiple passes at the solo, picking and choosing the parts we liked and redoing the ones we didn't. By doing this we ended up with a solo that not only complimented the song, but also changed the arrangement. Steve's solo ended up running through to the end of the song. This in turn inspired me to come up with harmonies for Steve's solos (mostly I just wanted to see if I could figure out his parts).

This is how a lot of the tracking was done for this record. I'd experiment with adding musical ideas that would push the songs in other directions. Friends like Gary and Quintin would email me their ideas for a song and this would in turn inspire new ideas from me. Four or five hours later I might be looking at a composition that was radically different than the little ditty I started out with. I was able to do this because I had a few good pieces of equipment: the Zoom H4, Macintosh iBook, Garageband, and a midi keyboard (a lot of it borrowed by the way), a quiet room, and the time to get it right.

Now I just have to figure out how to play it live.

Editor's Note: We're happy to report that Butch completed ***A Long Way From Shady Grove*** *just in time to get a cut on our enclosed sampler CD. He also contributed the sheet music for the tune,* ***Simple Short & Sweet****, which you'll find on page 22.*

Track List: *Radioverture; "sweet" Spotted Pony; Firenze* (with Quintin Stephens)*; Eleanor Rigby; Sandy River Belle* (with Gary Gallier)*; The Instrument Builder's House; Bird Watching; Pole Position; Simple, Short and Sweet; Goodbye Liza Jane/ No Direction Home; From Here I Can See the Northern Lights; Baskets; Anthem:Requiem; Shady Grove*

www.butchross.com

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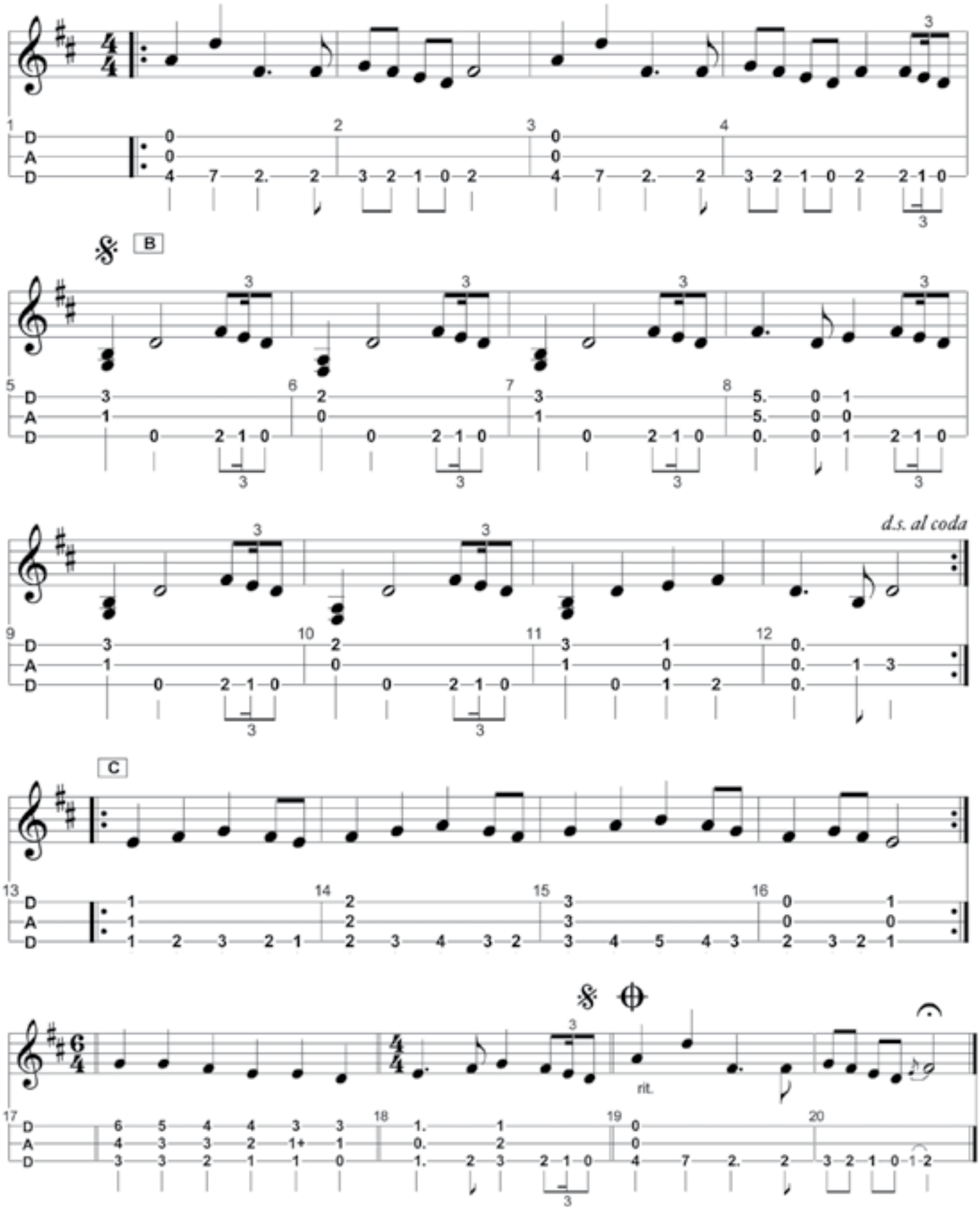
Simple, Short and Sweet

written by Butch Ross Form: ABABCBcoda



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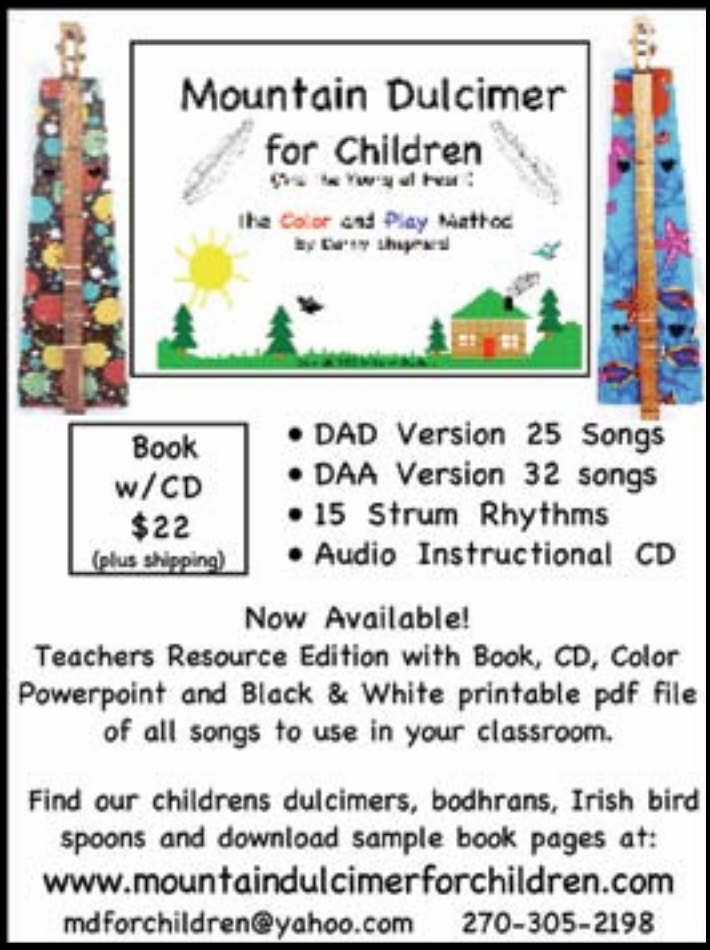

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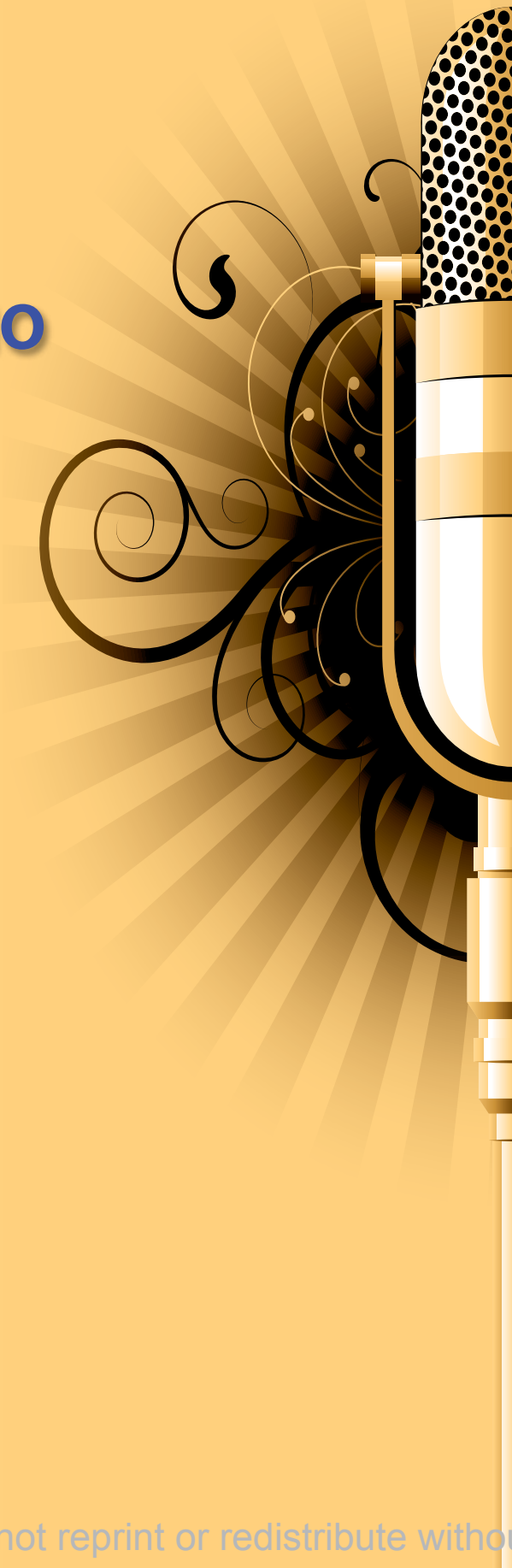
Garrett Viggers and the Mysterious, Wonderful, "Is this really happening?", Long Day In The Studio



Glancing over at the alarm clock, my eyes pulse with every second. The time is just past two o'clock in the morning. I am feeling absolutely exhausted while at the same time feeling more alive than ever. My mind muses on the mysterious events that unfolded in the studio today, or should I say yesterday, and not only today, but all the years, months, and recent few days that led up to today as well.

I am a singer-songwriter who has been leading worship for the past thirteen years. Originally, I began singing and playing the acoustic guitar, but soon fell in love with the hammered dulcimer after hearing Rich Mullins play and sing songs, such as *Creed* and *Calling Out Your Name*. Over the years I grew as a dulcimer player, and ultimately found myself purchasing a Dusty Strings D-600 from a new friend, Dan Landrum.

Two years ago I had the opportunity to spend an entire week in Dan's studio recording my first album, **Emmanuel**. I always believed the week I spent in Dan's studio (with a feeling of forced creativity) would help shape my future studio experience, and today's experience is something I'll never forget.

Finally, at three o'clock in the morning I fell asleep, but not before remembering the strange events that unfolded a few days earlier.

Just last week I was working on my new website, and much of my focus had been on capturing promotional video of me playing both the hammer and the lap dulcimer while singing. In my attempt, I called my friend Jesse, who happens to be the best cinematographer in our city, and asked him about the possibility of us making some video clips for my website. His response went something like this, "I'm booked solid with work until July, and the base price to set up my video gear is $800." As you can imagine, I quickly came to the realization that Jesse was not available.

Two days later, I received a call from a close friend of mine, Jeremy, who happens to be the best audio engineer in town with the best studio as well. The conversation went something like this, "Garrett, I hear you playing hammer dulcimer on a few songs I'm working on for a live acoustic project. Are you open to playing? Oh yeah, Garrett, did I mention Jesse will be filming and creating a BlueRay DVD for the finished product?"

My response was one of disbelief, as I saw an open door to record professional audio and video of my hammered dulcimer. I gladly accepted this invitation and prepared as best I could.

Today, or should I say yesterday, I arrived at the studio around eleven o'clock. The first few hours were spent

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tuning and practicing the song arrangements before we moved to prepping the video cameras and making sure our attire was fitting for all the cameras—five to be exact.

Around three in the afternoon my engineer friend, Jeremy, received a call from **Third Day**, a Christian band, who just happened to be in town playing a sold out show. After Jeremy got off the phone he nonchalantly said, "The guys in Third Day are going to drop by and check out my new studio."

Upon entering the studio, Third Day's lead singer Mac Powell quickly noticed my dulcimer and said something like, "Is that a hammered dulcimer? I remember sitting with Rich Mullins recording a song while he was playing his hammered dulcimer. Rich was such an inspiration to us all…etc."

For the next fifteen minutes I spoke with Mac about Rich's influence as an artist whose life and music was life changing for many.

Next, Mac said, "Well, play me something on that hammered dulcimer." We had fun for the next few minutes as I played some of Rich's tunes, as well as, some of my own songs. Before long, Third Day had left and were off to their show.

We began tracking at five o'clock and had our first break around seven o'clock. During the break I went into the console room to hear samples of the songs when Jeremy pulled me aside and asked me to read a text message he'd just received.

The message went something like this, "From Mac Powell: Hey Jeremy, we were thinking after our show maybe we could come over to your studio and record a song with your dulcimer friend, Garrett."

Jeremy's eyes moved from reading Mac's text message to reading the puzzled look on my face. We both knew that the recording project we were working on wouldn't be finished until midnight, but that didn't stop Jeremy from responding, "That sounds great! Come

Cover Photo by Lyn Rosten

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over after your show."

As the clock struck midnight, I said goodbye to some friends with whom I was working on the live acoustic project, and said hello again to the guys in Third Day.

Mac said, "Hey Garrett, we were thinking about maybe doing a few songs, and maybe Rich's song, *Creed*. Do you know *Creed*, Garrett?"

I responded, "Dude, I just performed and sang *Creed* on the dulcimer for our Easter Services a few weeks ago at church. Singing *Creed* on Easter has become a ritual for the past three years."

Mac quickly responded and said, "Why not sing a verse with me then?"

By this time it was one in the morning, and I wasn't feeling the need to sing, so I responded by saying, "That's ok. Why don't you sing and I'll just try to nail the hammered dulcimer part."

We ended up recording an acoustic version of Rich Mullins' song *Creed* with hammered dulcimer, grand piano, cello, 12-string guitar, bass, djembe, and both Mac Powell and Brandon Heath singing.

At the time, I didn't know that Brandon had just won Male Vocalist of the Year at the Gospel Music Awards.

We tracked the song live three times before calling it quits just before two o'clock in the morning. Not only did we record the audio, but Jesse just happened to capture the whole experience on film!

Jeremy called us into the console room to listen to the song. As I listened to the recording, I thought to myself how strange it was that Third Day just happened to have recorded the song *Creed* on an album in 2000, but without the hammered dulcimer. I also thought how strange it was that I just spent countless hours practicing this very song for an Easter Service a few weeks ago. Finally, I remembered my conversation with Jesse a week earlier in which I inquired about video for my website. Now, I thought to myself, I may just have something I can use for my new website.

This fifteen hour day in the studio was unlike any other I've experienced. You can see and hear the finished song on my website:

www.garrettviggers.com

Editor's Note: Garrett Viggers is one of the most effective dulcimer enthusiasts I've ever met. He's among a group of young, energetic players that are carrying their dulcimers into new circles, and introducing many people along the way to an inclusive world of music making. As his story of a serendipitous recording with Third Day shows, things that don't go according to plan can sometimes be blessings in disguise. Read the sidebar story below for a good example of tragedy turned to triumph in Garrett's ongoing story.
—Dan

Dulcimer Smasher

As I unloaded all my music gear at the office, I thought today would be another normal day. I ended up leaving my gear, including my Dusty Strings D600 hammered dulcimer, outside my door thinking I would set it up after lunch. I leaned my dulcimer against the rear wheels of the dually pickup. Lunch was great. I ate some delicious Thai food with a friend. On my way back I received a voice message from my close friend Mark, who I work with at church. He is normally always cracking jokes and making everyone laugh until their bellies hurt, but in this message he didn't seem to be cracking any jokes —or was he?

The message went something like this, "Uhhh…Garrett, uhh, @#%$, I just ran over your dulcimer. I can't believe I'm leaving this on your voice mail, uhhh…@#%$. I'm so sorry." Due to the few graphic words he used in the message, something told me he wasn't joking. The next minute I was back at the office and my friends Mark and Bill were standing outside with their heads hanging low. I slowly got out of my car and walked toward them.

My friend Mark was practically in tears as he began to recount his experience. He said something like this, "Garrett, I was in a hurry and had to move some stuff in front of the truck, I put it in reverse and moved back a foot or so, then started to pull out of the bay garage. When I felt something under the tires I thought it was a bag of recyclable cans, and I kept driving over your dulcimer."

My mind flashed back to me leaning my dulcimer up against the back wheels, which means that when he reversed a foot my dulcimer slid down right in front of the wheels. I'm surprised that I didn't feel much emotion as this unfolded, I guess I was in shock. Reality began to sink in when I remembered that I was booked for a wedding the next day, and Redding, CA doesn't have any dulcimer

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Smashed Dulcimer

shops. I ended up finding a dulcimer that was about half the size of my smashed dulcimer, but it worked none the less.

After seeing the smashed dulcimer with my own eyes I immediately called my friend, mentor, and dulcimer guru, Dan Landrum to tell him what had just happened. He couldn't believe me at first, but once I used a few choice words he understood the gravity of the situation. This is where the story gets a bit mysterious. Dan and I hung up the phone and within a few minutes he called me back and said Dusty Strings had a voice message waiting for him that went something like this, "Hi Dan, we have your new D650 with dampers ready to ship, please give us a call to get shipping info." Dan asked me if I wanted the D650, which happened to be the only new, dampered, D650 available in the country at the time. I thought to myself, a new dulcimer that is better than my smashed dulcimer? This experience was starting to take a turn out of the valley of tears and into the land flowing with D650s and damper systems.

The story finishes with me getting a check cut from the insurance company to purchase my new D650. They didn't even ask questions, but rather just saw the pictures of the truck and the smashed dulcimer.

Looking back on this day, I see how tormented my friend was. He didn't know how I would react. I actually felt worse for him than I did for me. My first response was to dust him off from the cloud of darkness that was over him. I did this to the best of my ability, but it didn't seem to fully work until he saw my new instrument. Then he asked me to thank him for the newer and nicer dulcimer. This will be a day I will never forget. I think of my smashed D600 as a grain of wheat that had to fall into the ground and die before it could bear some fruit. I also realize that people are more important than stuff, even a sweet Dusty Strings hammered dulcimer. To remind me of this experience, an artist friend has turned my smashed dulcimer into an epic piece of wall art that hangs in my office. - Garrett

Smashed Dulcimer Art

Photography by: Steven Mitchell
Dulcimer Wall Art by: Dan Ferrarese

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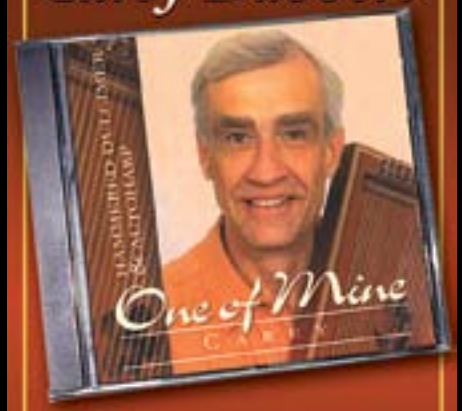

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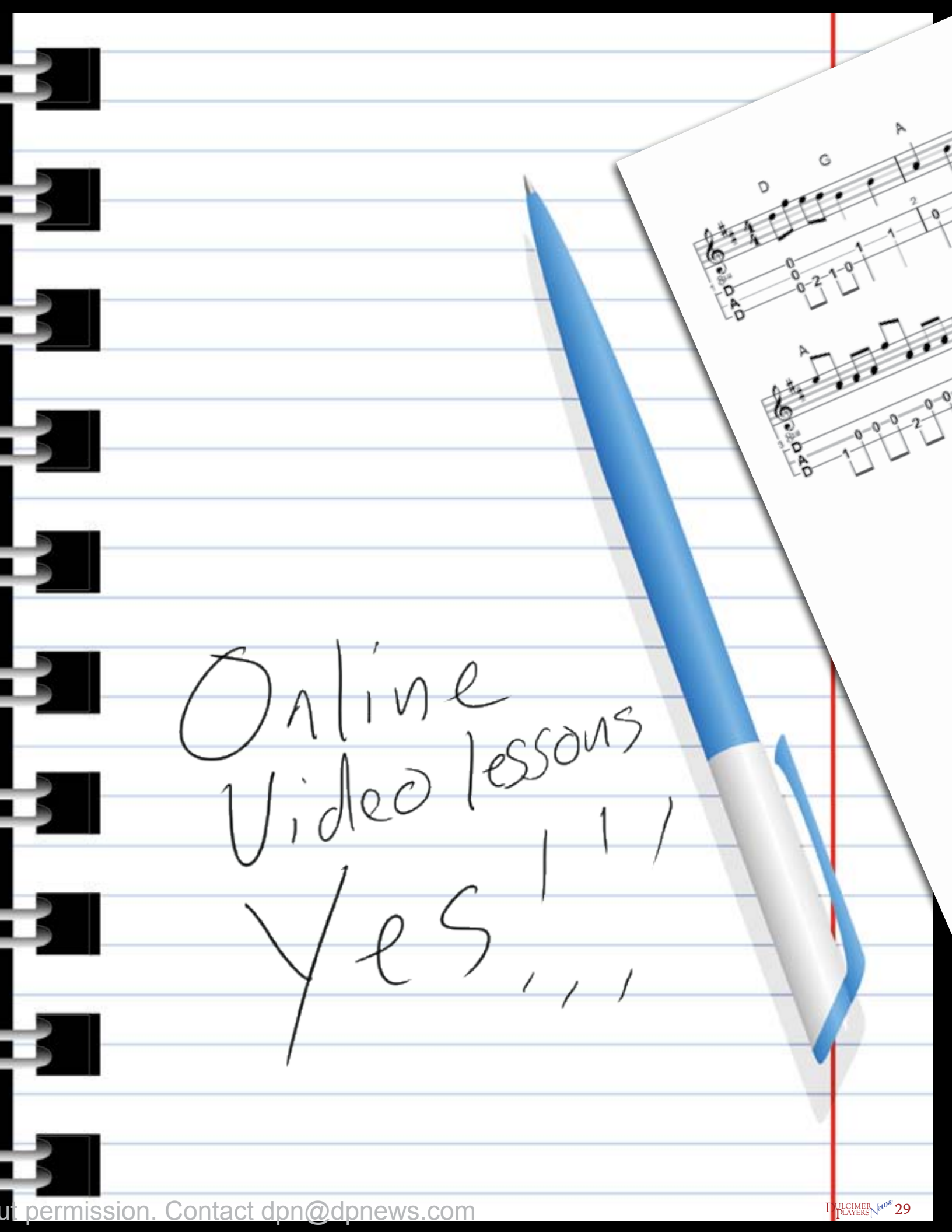

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Dulcimers & Weddings

Part Two

The Business of Getting a Bride Down the Aisle

by Steve and Ruth Smith

How do I get to that magical moment where my music is ushering the bride down the aisle to the love of her life? How do I find business? How much should I charge? Do I need a contract? What do I wear? Where do I begin?

Building the Business

First, and most importantly, you MUST have a good website. These days, all brides do all of their initial planning via the internet and email. Your website can be a very simple, one page site, but you should include sound samples of your playing. Get the best sound recording you can for a price you feel comfortable spending; anywhere from recording yourself with a good quality hand recorder (like the Zoom H2) up to booking time in a recording studio. Take advantage of all the social networking available on MySpace and Facebook, and get videos of you performing to put on YouTube. Your music will speak for you, so make it as high quality as possible within your budget.

Network. Develop relationships with other local wedding professionals: wedding/event planners, florists, photographers, caterers, etc. Always carry business cards with you and share them with other vendors at weddings, if appropriate. If there is an association of event services businesses in your area, join and participate regularly.

Contact party and wedding venues in your area and build relationships with the event planners at these venues. Some have an "approved vendors" list which they give to prospective brides, so ask how to get on that list. Check with local churches, also, to see if they will recommend outside musicians or if they only use their organist/pianist for all weddings.

Wedding shows can be a great way to get business, but carefully choose which show(s) you participate in. Some are quite expensive but may be worth it if you can book a lot of weddings.

Check out advertising rates in local papers and wedding magazines. These may also be worth it, if the circulation is reaching your targeted customers. However, since most brides do everything online, check into listing your services in some of the online wedding sites. Some are free, some you pay for in varying amounts, so work out which seems best for you. Search to see which sites come up first in web searches for your area.

How did the couple find you? Try to find out, keep track of trends, and base your advertising efforts on that information.

Customer Contact

Initially, when a bride contacts you, they will want a quick quote to see if your rates are within their budget. Try to avoid giving a quote in the first email because your rates may vary according to their specific plans, so encourage them to call and find out more about the services you offer. Even though talking on the phone is a little "old school" with the current generation of brides, talking with them gives you both a better idea of whether or not you would be right for them.

Don't high pressure brides to get business. Don't over-promise or overstate what you can do. If you have to convince someone to hire you, there could be problems down the road. Always remember—this is their wedding and they deserve to have the music they want, even if it's not you.

Once you take the job, be flexible. Be prepared to help with all of the music planning if they don't know much about how a ceremony goes. Lead them through each element of the ceremony and explain what you might typically play, include examples of the type of music you recommend, and refer them to your website to hear specific examples.

If the couple wants you to learn a special song, decide on fees. If it is something you will add to your regular repertoire anyway, you may not want to charge them. If it's something you don't plan to play again, set a reasonable fee in addition to your regular fee. Have them send the sheet music and a recording so you can hear the arrangement they are accustomed to hearing.

Ban Sticky Notes

Create an "information sheet" to organize all information in one place, including names, date, place, time, fees quoted and agreed upon, contact information of responsible party, song choices, number of family members to be seated, number in wedding party, directions to venue, emergency contact info for day of, info of event coordinator, and info of any other musicians playing with you. Other helpful items to possibly include: time the facility opens for set up, whether or not

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amplification is needed, where power outlets are located, what you should wear. (All black is usually appropriate.) It is very helpful for the flow of the processionals to know what the Mother of the Bride's hair and dress colors are, who the last person to walk before the Bride is, and what the minister's final words will be before the recessional begins. By doing these things in advance, there is no need for you to attend the rehearsal the night before, which saves you time and them extra money.

Also, find out about the couple. How did they meet? What kind of work do they do, or want to do? Where did they grow up? Where do their families live? What kind of music do they listen to? Anything that helps build your friendship with them—after all, you are an important part of their big day.

Contracts

A contract is a must, but it can be simple. There are sample contracts to get ideas from on various websites. Basics to include: names, date, time, location, details of services to be performed, deposit amount, wage agreed upon, when payments are to be made, cancellation policy, and provision for protection of your equipment if in an outdoor setting. A non-refundable deposit is reasonable to require. You have committed the date to them and may have to turn down other gigs, so don't feel bad about this. (But check on the laws in your area.) Include a clause to protect your clients, stating that any money paid in advance by them will be refunded in case you can't perform due to an unexpected, emergency situation.

Set a policy for final payment to be made before the event—1 month in advance works well as it gives you time to collect the money prior to the performance. Most vendors have gone to this policy as it can be so difficult (and awkward) to chase down the appropriate person on the day of the ceremony for payment.

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Fees

This can be difficult to determine. Remember—you are being compensated for more than just the wedding. You are also being paid for your experience, time spent planning the event, practice time, your investment in equipment and advertising, and travel time and expenses. Set a base fee and determine in advance what you will add for travel expenses to different locations. An all-inclusive fee quote seems to be less confusing, so state that your fee includes everything: your services, travel, sound equipment for your use. (Add a charge for learning a new tune on top of your normal fee, if appropriate.)

Check to see what other musicians are being paid in your area. Don't charge too little as that says you are inexperienced, and you will be undercutting other musicians in your area. Make sure you're worth what you charge, and then don't sound hesitant or ashamed when quoting your fees. However, don't give a big sales pitch that you can't live up to. Remember the charm of the dulcimer sells itself, especially if you have sound samples either on your website or a CD to send out.

Sound

Whether performing for an indoor or outdoor wedding, being heard adequately and with good fidelity is vital. Usually amplification will help you to be heard above the wedding guests' conversations during the prelude and give the needed dramatic effect during the processionals, special music, and recessionals. Amplification will also help balance the volume of the instruments if you play with others. The sound level should be soft and gentle for most weddings but, if you can't be heard, why have live music?

An unobtrusive looking sound system is very important as the visual elements of a wedding are key. Obvious and cluttered sound equipment will get in the way of flowers and other visual elements of the wedding. There are many different options (and opinions) out there, so research thoroughly and then choose sound reinforcement equipment according to your budget.

A small battery powered amplifier/speaker cabinet is best for both indoor and especially outdoor weddings. The German-made AER Compact Mobile acoustic guitar amplifier is perfect for the dulcimer. A more inexpensive alternative, but still a decent quality system, is the Crate Limo TX50DB portable amp. Both provide good quality sound in a battery-powered, compact, unobtrusive black case. Elevate your amplifier about waist high to project at ear level of the seated audience. An amplifier placed on the ground will accentuate the bass, making your instrument sound boom and mushy. If you use an amp without battery power, do not use orange power cords as they will spoil the decor.

An acoustic instrument pickup or internal microphone is preferable to a microphone on a mic stand as mics look cluttered and can be easily bumped. Outdoors, external microphones will pick up wind noise even with a wind screen. For hammered dulcimer, try the Barcus-Berry Planar Wave 4000 system (designed for acoustic piano and harp) mounted inside the hand hole against the inner rail (not on the sound board). Rather than buy the entire system which includes a preamp, run the Barcus-Berry pickup through an L.R. Baggs Para Acoustic DI box. The Baggs unit will allow you to equalize the tone of your dulcimer to sound more natural.

For a mountain dulcimer, something like the Audio-Technica AT831R Cardioid Condenser Lavalier microphone works nicely. It comes with a felt covered clip and mounts well to the sound hole or gaffed to the top. This is also a decent microphone for a hammered dulcimer and will drop down in a sound hole or stick up inside the hand hole underneath. Always use the included wind screen, even when dropping down in a sound hole, as wind can get inside. Always carry spare batteries for your equipment and change them regularly every few gigs. There's nothing worse than going dead in the middle of a bride's processional!

Remember to test your sound levels before the guests arrive, playing at the same volume in testing as you will when performing. EQ (set the tone on your amplifier) with a little extra treble (high frequency boost) because when the guests arrive, their bodies will soak up a lot of that high-end sound. Finally, make sure your levels are loud enough so you can be heard all the way to the back where the bride and attendants will be waiting to start their processionals.

Other Musicians

If you will be playing with other musicians, determine who will be the point person with the couple. This person will negotiate with, write the contract for, and determine song choices with the couple. Determine the form of songs to be played (AABB, etc.) and, most importantly, be sure to rehearse the processional songs so that they will begin smoothly and end appropriately, not dragging on long after the bride has arrived at the altar. Choose one of the musicians to watch the processional and cue the songs. Pick and rehearse a "go to" song to fill time in case of delays.

Timeline

Several months in advance

Choose music with the bride. Email the list of songs chosen to the bride, being certain to spell the names and composers correctly in case she will make a printed program. If you will be playing with other musicians, get the music to everyone and rehearse together as needed.

One week in advance

Call the bride to reconfirm everything. Re-check the start time and location, especially if it's been a long time since you've spoken with her—things can change! Items to confirm in advance: wedding start time and location, wedding day emergency contact and phone number, what time you can get in to set up, arrange to meet the person coordinating the processionals before you begin the prelude music, the last words of the minister before the recessional, and whether the minister will make any announcements before the guests' recessional. Get directions in advance from the bride and also use another source of directions to confirm her directions.

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Wedding Day Details

Do a preliminary tuning at home. Bring along the contract, the directions you received, business cards, and all equipment: your instrument, hammers, wrench, tuner, stand, amp, and extension cord, if needed. Remember your set list—make it easy to read! Allow plenty of time for travel (traffic, accidents, etc.) and for more tuning when you arrive. Make sure to allow enough time to set up and check the sound prior to the first guests' arrival. Situate yourself (or another in your group) to see the beginning and ending points of the processionals.

When you arrive on the day of the wedding, check all the details again with the coordinator. Often there will be a few last minute changes after the rehearsal, i.e., the flower girl won't go down the aisle, or a Grandparent couldn't make it after all.

Finally

Be professional: on time, neat in appearance, courteous, and unobtrusive. If you are well-prepared in advance, you'll do a good job, be able to enjoy performing, and be capable of making last minute adjustments, as needed. Always follow through with what you say you will do, and always thank the couple and family for allowing you to be part of their special day!

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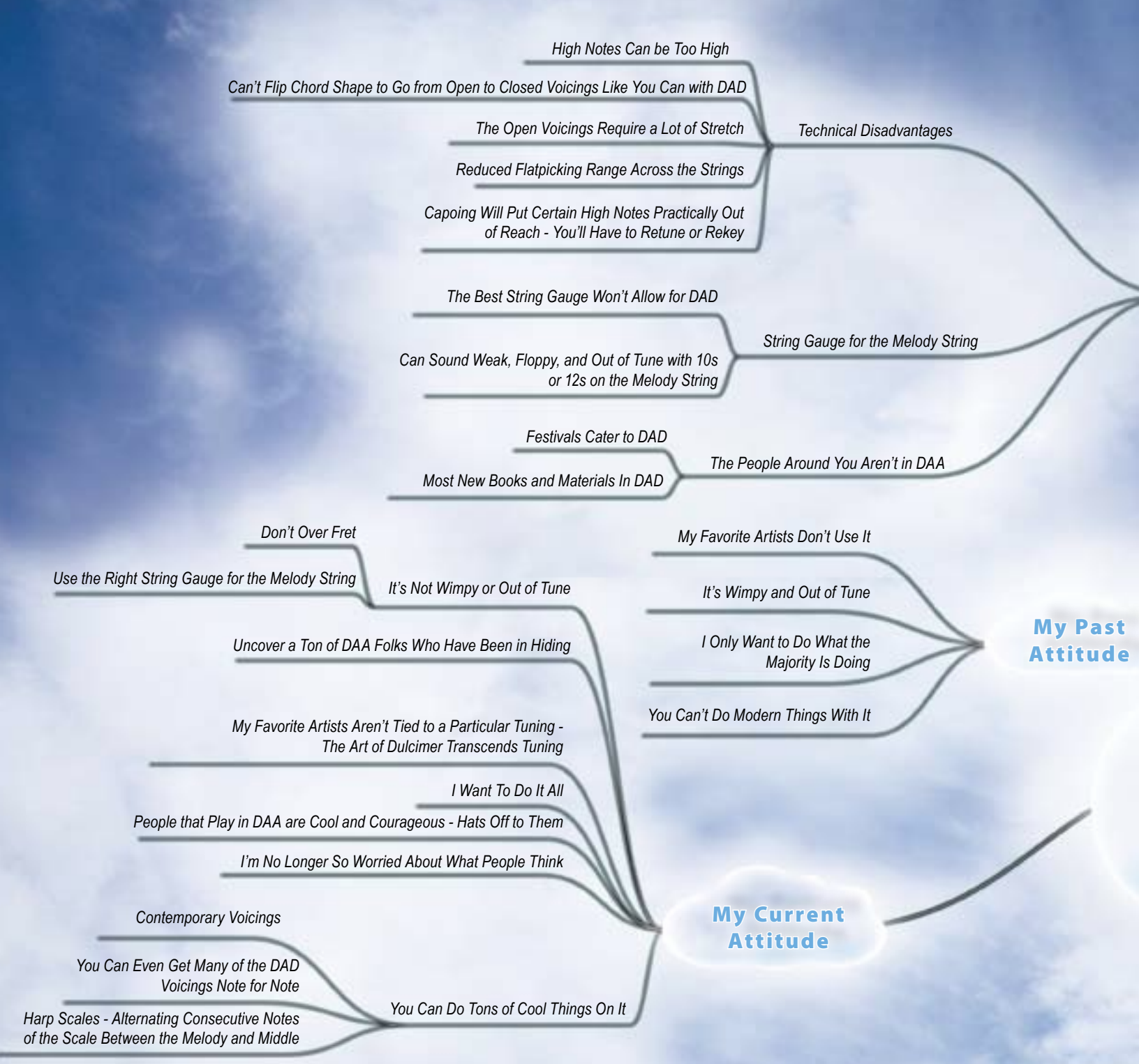

Are we leaving the DAA tun

It looks like we may have turned our backs on an old friend. Ionian, or 155, as some call it, worked just fine for a very long time. Why did we ditch it? Ask most people if they ever played in DAA. The longer a person has been playing the more likely they will tell you they started in DAA, but soon after switched to DAD, known as Mixolydian or 158. Most new players have been in DAD from the start.

I started in DAA with the Cincinnati Dulcimer Society. I was doing fine until it was pointed out to me a number of times by different folks that DAD was THE way to go. I figured the reason so many sounded better than me was bec the switch to DAD in n eventually ended up wo I'd run into some fine p For some reason, I felt were doing because the foolish I was being.

Over the years, I've until last year did I star

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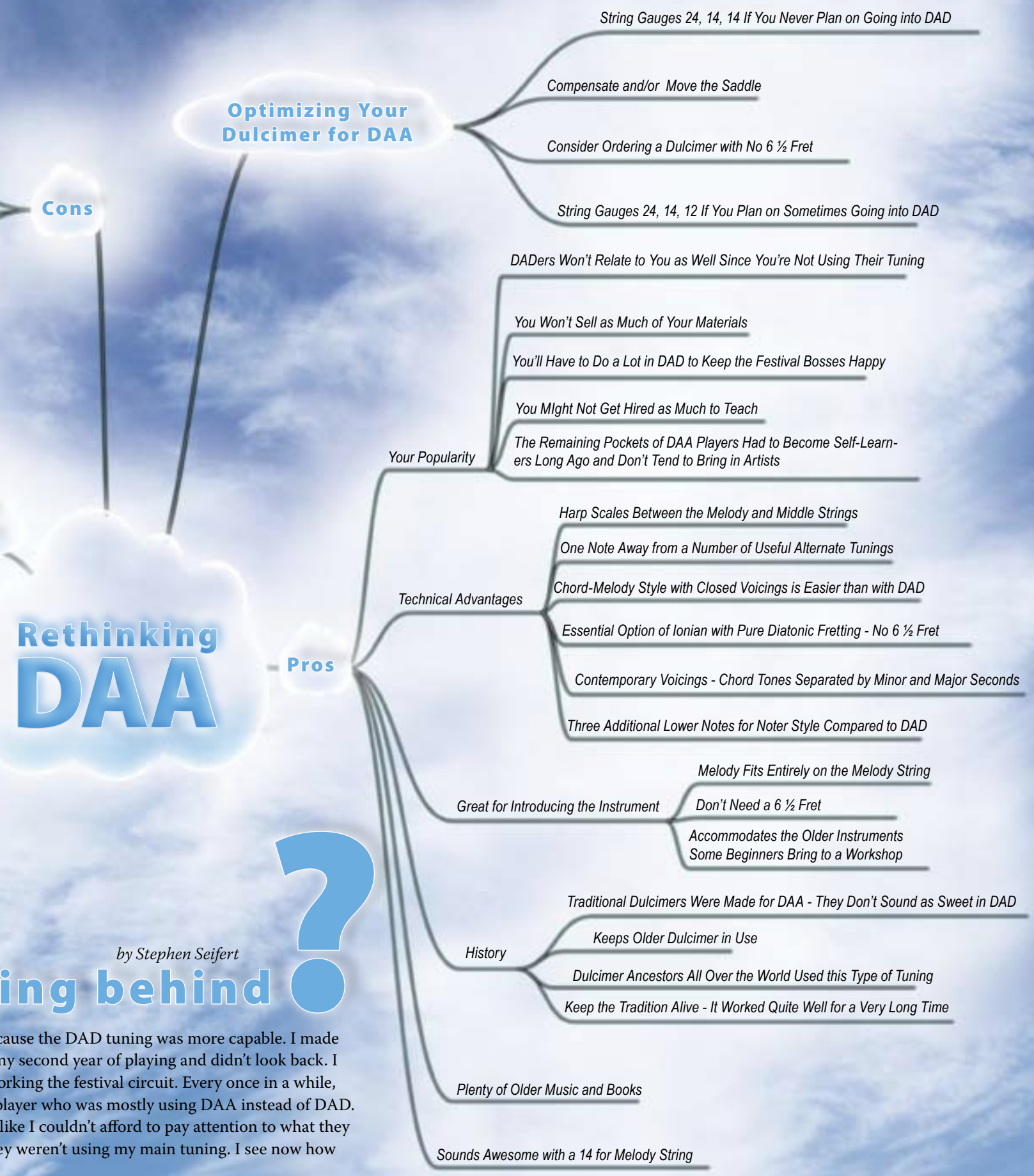
Rethinking DAA

by Stephen Seifert



ing behind ?

cause the DAD tuning was more capable. I made
ny second year of playing and didn't look back. I
orking the festival circuit. Every once in a while,
player who was mostly using DAA instead of DAD.
like I couldn't afford to pay attention to what they
ey weren't using my main tuning. I see now how

e fiddled with DAA from time to time, but not
t taking it seriously. One of my favorite dulcimers,

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a Jerry Rockwell, is somewhat modeled after the kind found 50 to 100 years ago in North Carolina. It has three strings, a narrow fingerboard, and no 6½ fret. With a few modifications from Jerry, I strung it up for DAA with 26, 14, and 14.

The 14 for a melody string meant I couldn't get into DAD. If I wanted mixolydian, I needed to either tune the bass string up to E (EAA) for A mixolydian or tune the bass and middle down to A and E. (AEA) I tried many different tunings but I was amazed at how that thicker melody string made DAA sound so rich and mature.

Although I haven't researched this completely, it looks like dulcimer builders, over the years, started to string up dulcimers so folks could tune into DAD if they wanted to. This left the melody string a bit floppy. I wonder if this led to people thinking DAA sounded a bit dull. A weak melody string easily goes sharp with overfretting. Maybe this is one reason DAA has gotten a bad wrap these last few decades.

Recently, I have gone to 26, 14, 12 for the string gauges to allow for DAD. It's a compromise that means I have to use a light left-hand touch when in DAA and DAG. (I should be using a light touch anyway, no matter the tuning.)

I've been surprised at how modern DAA can sound. Dan Evans, a great dulcimer player in England, first pointed this out to me. Some of the suspended chords you get are just incredible. There's also the time tested chord-melody style that's so soothing, especially with a strong sounding, in-tune melody string.

Consider David Schnaufer's 1979 article Harris Picking on page <?> of this issue. While he wasn't know as a DAA player, he obviously took the tuning seriously. The harp scales he's talking about are one of the coolest things about playing in DAA.

In DAA, the first note of the D major scale begins on the third fret of the melody string. This prepares you for other tunings where the first note of the scale starts on the third fret of the melody string. DGD, 141 or reverse Ionian, can sound either ancient or cutting edge depending on the player. DF#A, 135 or Triad tuning, has become quite popular. Familiar with the Galax, Virginia dulcimer traditions? They tune all the strings to the same note, allowing you to put the first note of the scale at either open or 3. None of these are whimpy or outdated.

I think the overall impression is that you just can't do much with DAA, compared to DAD. This is not true. The more time I spend using it and talking to others who do, the more nuggets I find. This tuning is not just for beginners.

I'm not trying to say DAD is on the back burner. I love DAD. It IS my main tuning, but I don't want to leave DAA behind. There's too many good things about it. I want to encourage you to consider doing the same.

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Hammer Kidz

by Martha Giles

"You're a teacher!?!? I'm going to tell!" was the shocked reaction of one of my preschool music students when someone introduced me as…yes, a teacher. In a four-year-old child's heart, the magical qualities of music aren't separated from the person playing the music. Another preschooler, noticing one day that I have a kitchen, finally realized that I might be human. "Mommy, Miss Martha eats food!" she whispered.

My dulcimer students are older—ages seven to fourteen—and certainly know that I am human and…yes, a teacher. Each comes to me once a week for a half-hour private lesson, and we come together monthly for jam sessions. Originally called the Hammer Kidz (after the Hammer Heads, a local adult dulcimer club), they recently informed me that they are going to choose their own name! We'll see what they come up with; the youngest says he wants to be a Hammerhead Shark.

Our jam sessions probably seem like parties (with delicious treats, and opportunities to try many instruments), but I also subtly introduce new concepts, skills, and tunes. When a tune is called that not everyone has learned, the others accompany on drums and assorted world instruments. We've discovered that our jam tunes also sound great on Joia Tubes*, and the Jumbie Jam** is a wonderful addition to calypso music. Autoharps are easy for everyone, and help to train young ears to hear chord changes.

While I occasionally arrange popular songs for them, it seems that these are usually soon forgotten, while more traditional tunes stick in their hearts and minds forever. Current collective favorites include *Road to Lisdoonvarna, Irish Washerwoman, Burning the Piper's Hut, Mari's Wedding, Childgrove, Shepherds' Hey* (with individual parts), *Yellow Bird, Down By the Bay* (with verses to sing), and *Hey, Ho! Nobody Home* (a round).

I am learning that there is no "ideal age" for starting to play the dulcimer. I initially thought that Patrick was too young, and suggested that he start with piano lessons. Patrick, however, was adamant that the dulcimer was his instrument— and he was right. I'm amazed at how rapidly he's learning note-reading and playing by ear. Most of my other dulcimer students have studied piano for a year or more. They read music well, but playing by ear and memorizing offer new challenges.

Photos by Sara Norman

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The first performance of the "dulcimer group formerly known as Hammer Kidz" took place last March at an assisted living center. This summer they will introduce the hammered dulcimer to young audiences in a series of library concerts.

While I would love to continue teaching each of these children for many years to come, I know that is not realistic. It is more likely that some will set their dulcimers aside after a year or two, to try different instruments or follow other interests. That's okay. I believe this dulcimer chapter in each of their lives is significant, no matter how long or short it turns out to be. The extra-musical benefits of music lessons (discipline, determination, perseverance, expression, stress relief, composure, courage, to name but a few) are real, but even more fundamental is the simple joy of playing music, alone and with friends.

I asked three parents to tell me about their hopes for their children.

Parents' Musical Wishes

"I knew that I wanted to bathe my children in music, and have it be a vital and natural part of their lives," says Rita, the mother of Chloé, recalling the atmospheric music of her own childhood in Ghana. Although she is a musician, she does not expect it of her children. "What I wish for Chloé and her brother is that they become life-long lovers of music and supporters of the arts, so that they can pass it down to their children, and so on."

Patrick was five years old when he first heard a live hammered dulcimer performance. "He began air hammering, and begged to take lessons. He told his preschool class that he was going to play the hammered dulcimer," said his mother, Rosemary. They rented a dulcimer one year later and contacted me about lessons. Patrick's parents describe music as, "a powerful tool, a door opener, an ice breaker, a brain builder, and, hopefully, a lifelong pursuit."

" . . . a powerful tool, a door opener, an ice breaker, a brain builder, and, hopefully, a lifelong pursuit."

For Lauren, a twelve year old girl with autism, the hammered dulcimer has become especially important, for both self-expression and help with socializing. "Recently we have started to think how music may play a role in Lauren's future," says her mom, Peggy. "When it comes time for a career, we have been told to find out what she loves doing and start from there. It's hard to know what the future will bring, but I feel confident in her love for music…that is truly a blessing!"

Dreams of the Future

We're already thinking ahead to our ten-year reunion (in 2019). Pieter will be heading off to grad school to study engineering. Lauren and Kiersten, on their way to becoming veterinarians, will be doing summer internships in Melody's animal clinic. Chloé will be starring in college theatrical productions. Nat will have stories to tell us about his new job as a firefighter or policeman, and Patrick will bemoan the fact that he has still one more year of high school; he's eager to get on with his career of digging for dinosaur bones.

This imaginary reunion is a composite of their dreams, but dreams and plans change. Life brings surprises. No one knows what lies ahead for any of them, but one thing is certain: the benefits of music lessons, especially at their receptive young ages, will accompany them anywhere. They are fortunate children with wise, intuitive parents.

Check back with us in 2019!

Martha Giles teaches (shh…don't tell!) piano and hammered dulcimer in her Virginia Beach home. She is grateful to her hundreds of former students for all that they have taught her. www.marthagiles.com

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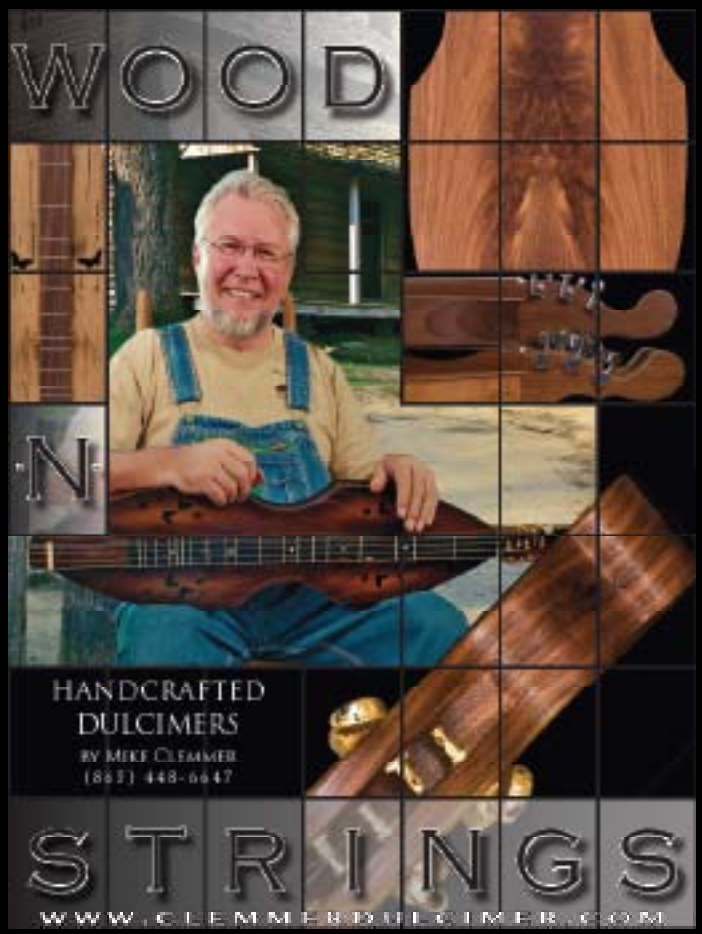

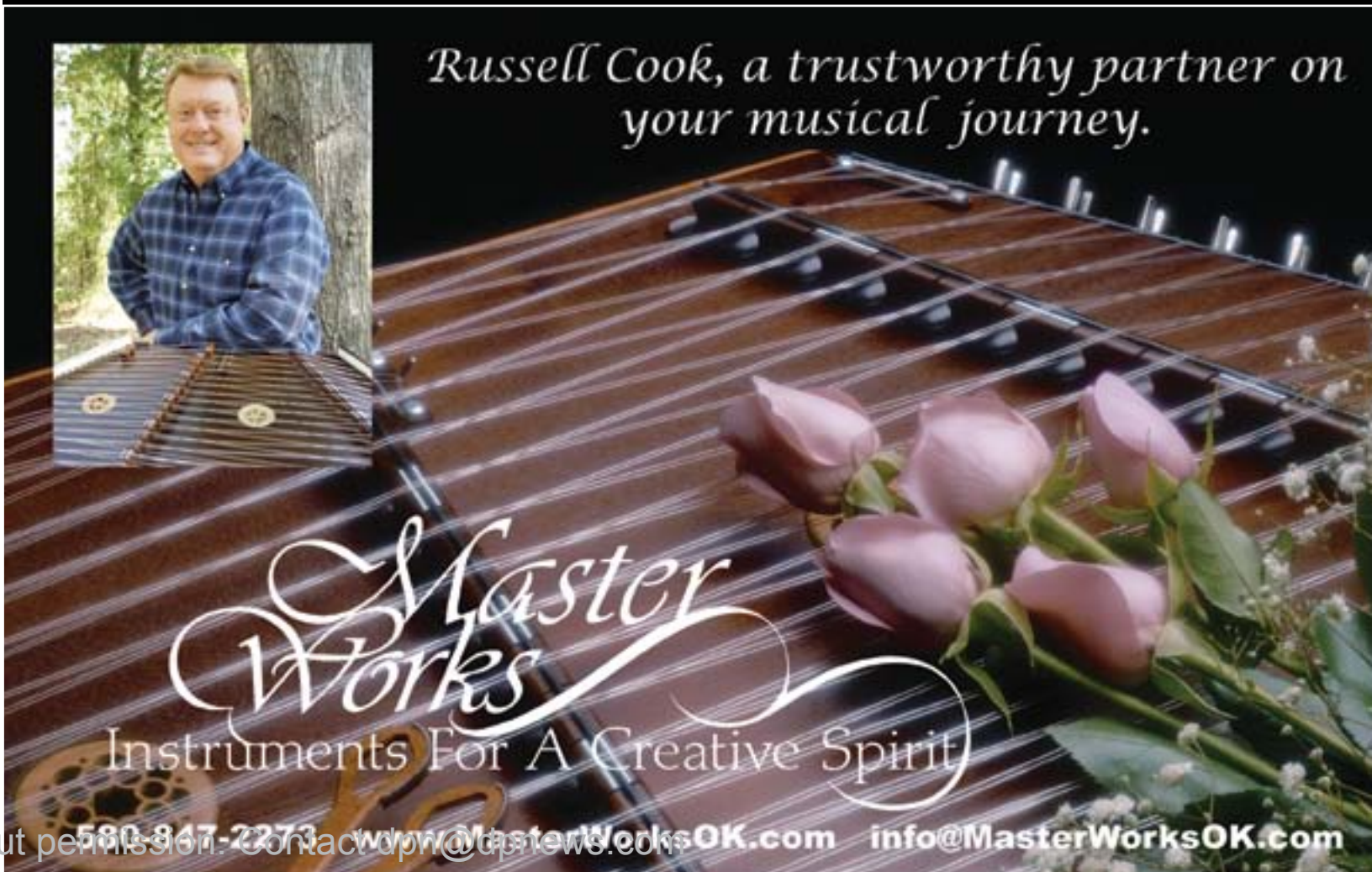

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DULCIMER DANDIES

TRADITION BEARERS

by Sue Sutton

In the fall of 2008, the Dulcimer Dandies of the Martin Senior Center in Brentwood, TN presented a short program at Smyrna West Alternative School in Smyrna, TN for their Heritage Celebration; little did we know what was to follow!

After much discussion and research through Dulcimer Players News and various dulcimer websites, the school purchased 12 cardboard dulcimer kits from Backyard Dulcimers.

Twenty-four teenage students built and decorated their kits as well as strung the instruments as part of their hands-on development program. And so began their dulcimer adventure!

As a member of the Dulcimer Dandies, I began working with the students in February 2009 over a 12 week period. Wow!! I quickly enlisted the assistance of my fellow dulcimer players to teach the fret board, tuning, strumming and tablature. We never had enough hands but the students were excited and responsive.

After much rolling of eyes, the teens learned *Boil Them Cabbages* and *Old Joe Clark*. It was magic when they realized they were actually playing a musical instrument. Since the students were all smiles, we added *When The Saints Come Marching In* and *You Are My Sunshine*. Now they had a real play list and each week the improvement was evident to students and teachers. The school was thrilled with the progress of their teens.

It was a journey that brought unexpected challenges and accomplishments, as the young people went from disbelief in their ability to learn to play, to joy in their achievement and the music they created.

Learning to build and play dulcimers was great fun, but more importantly, the students grew in confidence and self-awareness. Upon completion of the 12 week mentor program, the students were recognized by their individual schools with music credit toward graduation.

In May 2009, the Smyrna West Dulcimers performed at a local retirement center, their first gig! It was inspiring and joyful to see and hear. The group also played on stage with the Dulcimer Dandies at the Grand Old Dulcimer Day Festival in Nashville, TN in May 2009. The highlight of the day was in the jam tent where Stephen Seifert joined them playing the tunes they had learned over the past few months.

What a day! As mentors we couldn't be more proud.

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Searching For The Stradulcimerius

By Fred Petrick

Amati, Guarneri, Stradivarius. If it's true for violins, it must be true for dulcimers: **Older is better**. That's what I thought when I set out to find myself an antique hammer dulcimer.

It started when I entered the word, dulcimer, into my public library's search engine and found Nancy Groce's, The Hammered Dulcimer In America. "I must have one," I thought. "It will look cool. My playing will sound better, and everyone will envy me and kiss the hem of my garment."

I emailed Paul Gifford to ask how he found his antique dulcimers. As it turns out, he spent his youth frequenting flea markets and antique stores in northern Indiana and southern Michigan. This sounded like fun, but, I worried that by the time I found an antique dulcimer, I'd have no money left to buy it.

In the spring of 1999, thanks to eBay, which is the 21st century version of a garage sale, I got one. It was an Ezra Durand parlor dulcimer that used to be part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection. It was featured on the cover of a 1901 Met catalog, and came complete with its accession number (1440) scratched on its back. It also came with its original hammers, with wound yarn tips mounted on flexible metal shafts riveted to flat wooden handles. They feel like playing with a pair of barbecue forks.

With the help of Paul and Oksana Revenko-Jones of **Music of the Spheres PianoWorks** in Chicago, I spent the summer restoring the Durand. I learned a few helpful tips.

- Tighten loose tuning pins by gluing thin strips of veneer into the holes.
- Piano restorers use wedge-profiled strips of wood to fill long cracks. Whittle to shape, apply glue, pound into the crack and sand down.
- Ezra Durand was in it for the money, not for the music. He put a rural dance band instrument into a fancy case with the bass bridge on the left, so it would seem like the more genteel piano. But his dulcimer is still basically a crude wooden box with strings stretched across it.

"More, more, I'm still not satisfied"

The Durand was not enough. I wanted another antique dulcimer, and I wanted it to look really impressive. And it did. My second antique dulcimer came all the way from Yorkshire in the UK, with the shipping costing nearly as much as the instrument itself.

Here in the USA in the 21st century, we're accustomed to three colors on a hammer dulcimer: Light wood, dark wood and metal. This East Anglian dulcimer, similar to the one that Billy Bennington played, was made sometime between 1870 and 1920.

It is far more colorful, with light and dark wood and the metal of the strings, plus shining brass bridges and brass caps on top of the chessmen, bright red cloth under the side bridges and in the sound holes, and intricate wooden marquetry on the top and bottom rails. It's likely that it was factory-made; there's a similar one from the Douglas Piano Company of London shown on David Kettlewell's website.

Unfortunately, the beauty was only skin deep. The soundboard was cracked in many places, and I could see that the back was separating from the pin blocks. So I started to disassemble and repair it, and the grief began:

- Hot water and vinegar is supposed to dissolve hide glue. But it seemed like Super Glue was invented in the 19th century and used on my dulcimer. It took forever to disassemble.
- The tuning pins work backwards—turning counter-clockwise tightens the string. This led to a good deal of cursing, until I remembered to think lefty tighty, righty loosy.
- I had to sacrifice my favorite necktie—red silk—to make new cloth inserts for the sound holes.
- Four strings per course exert twice the string tension of the usual two strings. Once I'd reassembled and strung the East Anglian dulcimer, it began to bow, pulling itself apart.

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I had to disassemble it again, make a new back, and reassemble it, this time (thanks to a suggestion from my teacher Dona Benkert) with just two strings per course. Now it stays in tune, with no bowing, and has a high-pitched old-fashioned tinkly tone.

"Hmmm, what about that one?"

You'd think that with a handsome, nice sounding, highly-decorated hammer dulcimer I'd be satisfied. But when a Mackenzie Piano Harp appeared on eBay, I was there waving my money in the air.

One often-quoted statistic says there are only about 30 Mackenzies in existence. I doubt they are that rare; I've seen 7 or 8 for sale on eBay, Etsy, and other sites over the past ten years, at prices from a few hundred dollars to a ridiculously-ambitious $30, 000.

James Mackenzie manufactured them in Minneapolis in the last quarter of the 19th century. The dulcimer's popularity was declining in favor of the piano, so he tried to compete by offering what amounted to a miniature piano minus keys. It was as if he was introducing the world's best slide rule to compete against calculators and computers.

Mine weighs 130 pounds and is so large that the freight company would not deliver it to a residence. So I had it delivered to the tennis club where my daughters worked and picked it up there. It took three people to carry it out to my Honda CRV, and it stuck out the back door as I drove it home.

Disassembly revealed why the Mackenzie weighs so much: Underneath its soundboard is a cast iron frame like that of a piano.

- Because of its arched soundboard (2 inches higher in the middle than at the tuning pins) the Mackenzie has six bridges instead of four. This leads to much cursing during stringing, as strings end up over or under the wrong bridge or through the wrong hole.
- The bass tuning pins are on a separate shelf below the treble pins, almost inaccessible to thick adult fingers trying to hold strings down with one hand while winding up the string tension with the other.
- Mackenzie was a good musical instrument maker, but he was a lousy cabinet designer. The original heavy two piece top is held on by two tiny, flimsy hinges, folding back so that it: (a) tears the hinges loose, and (b) punches holes in the plaster wall behind the dulcimer. Ignoring Antique Roadshow's insistence on original finish and hardware, I re-configured mine with full length piano hinges so that it folds in on itself.

If weight, size, and price makes the Mackenzie Piano Harp the Rolls Royce of antique dulcimers, then my fourth dulcimer is a Chevy.

"OK, just one more and that's it."

My last dulcimer acquisition was built by Elon and Wheeler Hackett and Elon's son Joseph of Liberty Center, Ohio. It was made some time in the last quarter of the 19th century. Like Chevrolets, Hackett dulcimers are fairly common; I've seen half a dozen or more for sale on eBay.

- Even though its small town origins make it the least pretentious of my four antiques, the Hackett has the nicest tone.
- The orange/brown grain painting on the outside of the case—made to imitate rare hardwood grain—is spectacular.
- Like a 1950 Chevy, the Hackett was easy to work on. I fixed a few cracks, cut some steel rod for new side bridges, restrung it, and I was ready to play. No more difficult than changing the oil.

After the Hackett, I stopped collecting (well, for now anyway) for two reasons. First, my wife pointed out that after working on these dulcimers, scattering sawdust all over the house, I rarely played them. But she still had to dust them. And second, I vaguely remembered something that Mother Maybelle Carter once said about the advantages of fame and fortune: She could pay someone else to tune all those autoharp strings for her. I have no someone else to tune all my dulcimers.

So I've learned there is no Stradulcimerius. Older is not better. When I play, I prefer my Cloud Nine 15/14, made in the 1990s instead of the 1890s. It sounds better, it stays in tune, and it will rest at an easy-to-play diagonal on a stand, unlike three of my four antiques. - Fred Petrick, fredpet1@comcast.net

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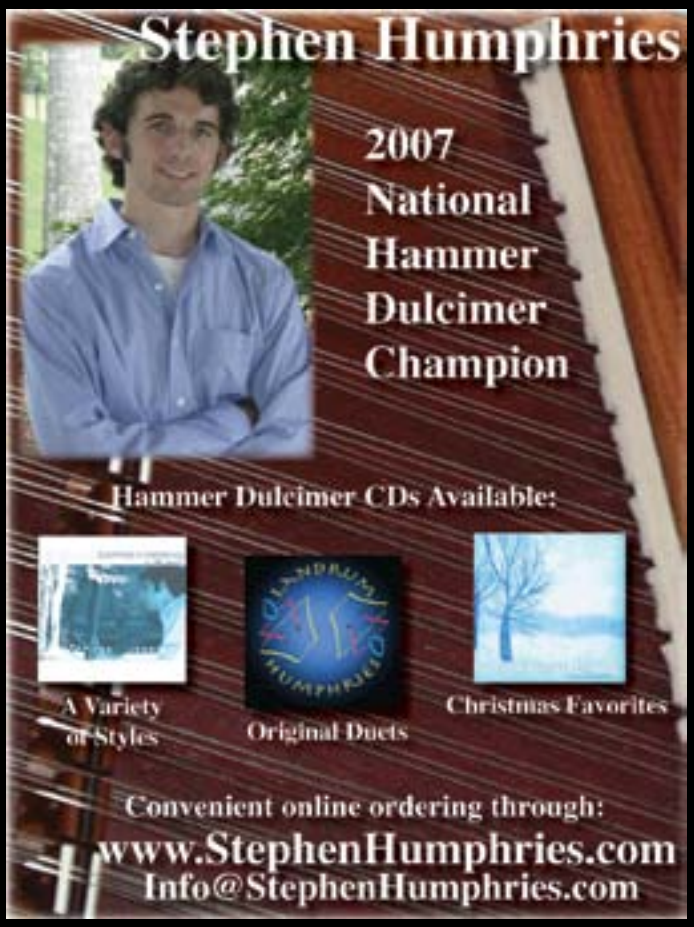

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Practice Time

by Stephen Humphries

Practice. The word can bring to mind thoughts of piano lessons in elementary school, or fruitless efforts to turn breath into meaningful sound from the other end of a horn in high school band. These efforts were often accompanied by pleas, and sometimes threats, of teachers and parents for us to practice our instruments, even just a little bit, each day. Some surely uttered the words, "Practice makes perfect," but is it really that simple?

While the saying can prove true, there are a couple of qualifiers. First, we should realize that a more appropriate statement is that "Practice makes permanent." Therefore, only "perfect practice makes perfect." Logical? Unfortunately, even those of us who have taught (and been taught) this principle for years don't always heed its implications. How many times have you sat down to practice but could not focus on a specific task? The urge to rip through your favorite fiddle tunes, Bach prelude, or composition you've been playing with suddenly takes over before you are really warmed up. Before you know it, time has flown by and you have to head back to your whirlwind day. Did you accomplish much? Did you plan to accomplish much? It's possible that you did, but maybe it was not as much as you could have.

Let's think through some ways to help maximize precious practice and playing time.

Playing the dulcimer is both a physical and a mental exercise involving arms, wrists, hands, fingers, and minds. It is important to keep all of these parts of yourself functioning in proper ways. What follows is a holistic approach to safe and effective practicing that I've adopted from my percussion training. These concepts are not meant to apply to any one type of music or instrument. They are general guidelines that I believe will help any musician who desires to improve, and see progress through regular practicing.

STRETCHING YOURSELF

Gentle stretches of the arms, wrists, hands, and fingers warms up the muscle groups you will use in your playing. Because playing (not to mention lugging the instrument around!) is a physical exercise, we use more muscle groups in the arms, hands, wrists and fingers than we might ever really think about. If these muscles are tight when we start out, our playing can suffer. Even worse, injury could occur if certain muscles are overused without proper stretching. While the risk for injury may not be very great depending on your playing style or how efficient your movements are, playing for any length of time puts us all at risk for some type of injury. A serious runner would never take off in a race without first stretching. Likewise, it is valuable for us as musicians to make sure we don't launch into a blizzard of notes without taking a few minutes to stretch.

WARMING UP

Whether you are playing *Flight of the Bumblebee* or *Westphalia Waltz*, taking time to properly warm up helps improve blood flow to necessary muscles. Whether you spend your warm up time running scales, practicing chord positions or shapes, or doing rudiments, starting at a slow tempo with a metronome is highly encouraged. For hammered dulcimists, exercises combining rudiments (especially single and double strokes) with scales and chords make great warm ups. Practicing without taking time to warm up is basically like deciding you want to go on a jog around the neighborhood, but you don't have the time to tie your shoes. You can do it, but you have a much greater chance of falling all over yourself! Even a few minutes of warming up before practicing will help get your muscles warm and allow you to hone in on technical aspects of playing your instrument.

SETTING GOALS

Sometimes practicing your instrument can be a lot like cleaning your room. You know the room will function just fine as a room without the cleaning, so why take the time and effort when you could be doing something else? Besides, where do you start? I have found that setting goals for my practice sessions can be a great help. Even if I make a list of only one or two things to work on, I find that it is much easier to focus and make my time more productive.

Tracking Progress:

Some people find it helpful to keep a practice journal, either to record what was done at the end of each session, or to make a list and check off exercises or songs as they go. Being specific is key. Instead of saying, "Monday: Practice chords and a fiddle tune or two," try something more like, "Monday: Work on minor chords and the [A] part of *Whiskey Before Breakfast*." Start small, start simple, but most importantly just start! Learning and using good goal setting disciplines can help transform even the 15-30 minutes that may be all you have to give to your instrument each day.

SLOWING DOWN

There is nothing harder than playing slow music. Even the best musicians find it difficult to perform slow music, much less practice a fast piece at a slow tempo. However, I have always been taught, and slowly come to realize myself, that if I can't play the piece slowly, I won't be able to play it fast. Mastering a piece at a slow tempo is the key to playing it cleanly and with intended expression at performance tempo. Taking time in your practice sessions to work with a metronome at a slow tempo will greatly increase accuracy, rhythm, and memorization. For instance, when you are working on a tune, figure out at what tempo you want to be able to perform it. Choosing this tempo is important even if you can't play it there yet. Write the tempo down in your practice journal.

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Stephen Humphries is the 2007 Winfield National Hammered Dulcimer Champion. He is currently pursuing his Master of Music in Music Education at Lee University in Cleveland, TN. Stephen plays music as much as he can and loves to write and arrange music for hammered dulcimer, as well as percussion instruments.

www.stephenhumphries.com

Next, slow the metronome down 20-30 bpm. Try playing it at this slower tempo. Do you find it difficult? Try slowing it down even further. Once you can comfortably and accurately play the piece 2-3 times at this super-slow tempo, try speeding it up in small increments (4-10 bpm). Over time you should reach the target goal, even if you couldn't play it at that tempo before. You don't have to play through the whole piece each time you change tempos, though it wouldn't hurt to do so. Actually, it might hurt, but in a productive way! Slow practice isn't easy, but it is certainly effective. Make this investment in your playing and you'll reap the benefit in the long run.

PRACTICING YOUR PLAN

The methodical approach to practice I've outlined here isn't intended to take the place of just sitting down and playing for fun. It will ultimately add more fun to your fun though. The benefit of practicing with a plan applies to all instruments and all players, regardless of skill level. I've presented just a broad overview of many different aspects that can contribute to effective practice time. The best plan is almost always one you come up with yourself, and then follow consistently.

Even if the dulcimer is just a hobby and playing is just for fun, try applying one or two of these ideas. You might just find that they can add a little fun to practicing tunes, and that practicing begins to add a little more enjoyment to your playing.

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TRY THIS

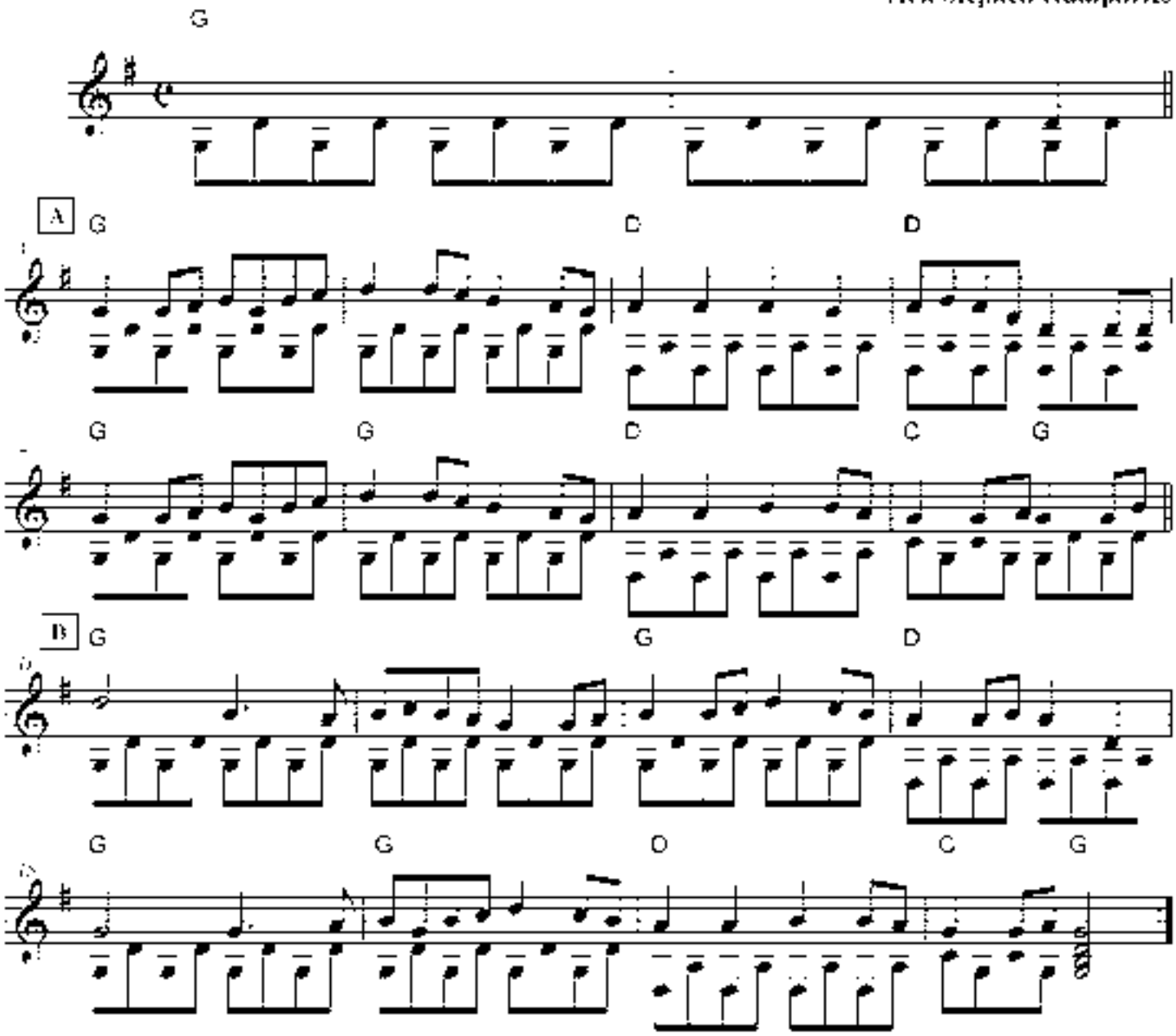
This arrangement is from an instructional book I'll have ready for release in August. This is a good example of the kind of exercises that will help you develop hand coordination.

The right hand keeps the "motor" (ostinato) running through the whole piece, while the left hand plays the melody. A good balance between the hands is key. Throughout this piece, the accompaniment should stay softer than the melody.

The entire right hand part can be played horizontally (from the right side of the treble bridge to the left side, or from the bass bridge to the treble bridge, a perfect fifth apart) on marked, or first position, courses. Feel free to add repeats, try varying dynamics (soft/loud), play the whole piece an octave lower, and even change some chords or notes in the ostinato part!" - Stephen

Simple Gifts

Traditional
Arr. Stephen Humphries



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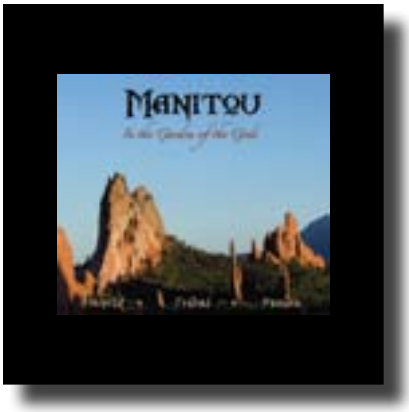
Manitou
In the Garden of the Gods



by Nancy Johnson Barker

It's always been a belief of mine that when you bring together two or more like minded musicians, and have them draw energy each from the other, you will create the music of an additional soul, another sound from the combining of spirits that was not to be found in their separate voices. The Manitou Project, as it has become known, is one of those experiences.

Late in the summer of 2007, seven musicians, a sound engineer, and a group of friends–each with their own unique talents—carried instruments and equipment and traveled by foot to the red rock cliffs of the Garden of the Gods, just outside Manitou Springs, Colorado. The musical spirit that was created in just 90 minutes of recording time is evident in the resulting CD.

The brainchild of dulcimer legend Robert Force, this recording blends not only the talents of those in company, but brings a voice to the physical location. It was as if the natural dramatic beauty of the towering red rocks came alive in the notes that were played.

I found myself not just listening to this balance of sounds, but feeling like I was a part of what had happened there… the improvised threads of music combined with earth, rock, and sky and were woven into a tapestry of heart-felt music.

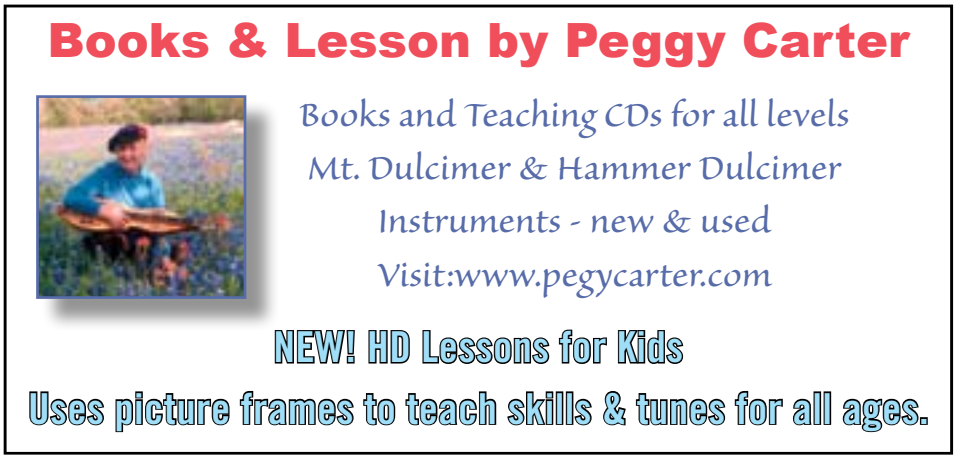
As I listened to Manitou it also occurred to me that each person will hear something different, something personal to them, in these tunes. And each may also find a favorite that sings to them above the others. The music of Manitou is soothing, invigorating, relaxing, and stimulating. It is definitely a step into another dimension with the dulcimer, but just as natural sounding as an ancient ballad being played in the eastern Kentucky hills.

Some additional standouts for me were:

- The way the melodies from the different players wandered, met, and joined together on their journey.
- The exquisite use of percussion as it became the heartbeat of the music.
- The female voice, played as another instrument added an unexpected and haunting human touch to the mix on a couple of the cuts.
- The guitar work, tasteful and insightful, and the bass work, prominent on some cuts, but not overpowering in the blend; both added to the strength and texture of the project.
- The ancient and mysterious sounds of the didgeridoo.
- Most of all—the feelings brought to the surface by these sounds, as the dulcimer blossomed, a new flower in this Garden of the Gods.

Manitou is an Algonquin word for the supernatural forces that pervade the natural world, existing in various life forms.

Robert Force, Dave Batti, Bing Futch, Bud Ford III, Judy Piazza, Quintin Stephens, Roger Zimish, and the others involved have given us a unique gift. My only regret is that I was not there to experience this event with them. - Nancy



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Reviews

Cort Tangeman
Moving Forward

by Karen Alley

Moving Forward isn't just the title track of Cort Tangeman's first solo hammered dulcimer CD, it's also an accurate description of the album as a whole. Cort is an up-and-coming young dulcimer player whose music is truly moving forward. His light percussive style, similar to what is heard in the music of Dan Landrum and Stephen Humphries, gives all his tunes an engaging flow. Cort's energetic personality comes through strongly in all of his pieces, and is sure to translate to the listener in a toe-tapping manner. He gives familiar fiddle tunes such as *Little Liza Jane* and *Old Grey Cat* innovative twists, using the tricks of his dampers and his dulcimer to their fullest potential. The rhythmic aspects of his arrangements are supported by very natural and dynamic chord structures and melodic adaptions.

Remarkably, this is the same album you'll want to pull off the shelf when in a contemplative mood. While Cort always maintains the flowing rhythmic quality so characteristic of his style, he focuses it equally well into pieces that are slow and melodic. He uses the most gorgeous tones of the hammered dulcimer in his arrangements of traditional hymns. However, I believe his strongest pieces are those he has written himself. You don't need to read the title of *Planxty Papa*,for instance, to feel the emotion behind the melody.

I have had the opportunity to play with Cort a few times, and I never come away without learning something new from him. Cort is always moving his music forward in innovative and exciting ways. This CD captures them all, along with the emotion of its performer, in a wide variety of pieces. After listening to the album several times, I'm still finding levels and tricks he has included in his pieces that I didn't notice the first few times. Whether you're looking for an album to pick up on new techniques, to enjoy lively and exciting music, or to hear beautiful and satisfying pieces, this is the one to choose. - Karen

Track List: Moving Forward; Little Liza Jane; Simple Gifts; Wings of the Wind; O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus; Planxty Papa; Russian Spring; 'Tis So Sweet/What a Friend; Butcher's Gap; Lullaby; Ode to Brotherhood; Battleground; Connaughtman's Rambles; Old Grey Cat; Morning Has Broken; When I Walk by the Way; Quiet Places

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My All Bring
Martin Moore

Artist Statement: After playing in various bands and groups for many years, this is my first instrumental solo project. This is a personal project, a compilation of my favorite hymns that I grew up singing at church in the foothills of North Carolina.

I'll Fly Away; Only Trust Him; It Is Well With My Soul; Wherever He Leads I'll Go; Joyful, Joyful; He Leadeth Me; Amazing Grace; ***Send The Light****; Jesus Loves Me; Tis So Sweet; There Is A Fountain; Have Thine Own Way; Blessed Assurance; Just As I Am*

www.myspace.com/MartinMooreMusic
MartinMooreMusic@gmail.com
210 Eldrege Street
Wilkesboro, NC 28697

TNT - Having A Blast
Ginny Cliett, Linda Smith, Deby Libby

Artist Statement: The Nameless Trio (T.N.T.) began playing together regularly in the fall of 2006, and this CD is a compilation of original, familiar, "twisted", and traditional tunes all performed by the three of us using various types of dulcimers (standard, baritone, Ginger, Banjammer, and bowed).

Rats in the Fence Corner/Old Yeller Dog; Sisters; The Ash Grove; Bonnie Doon; Twisted; The Gentle Maiden; Greensleeves; June's Lullaby; Cat Hair On My Fretboard; Londonderry Aire; Plaisir D'Amore; The Water is Wide; Soldier's Joyous Waltz; In the Bleak Midwinter/Hearth and Fire; ***Saro Waltz****; Cajun Medley*

TNT Dulcimers
1017 Pintail Road
Knoxville, TN 37934
www.tntdulcimers.com
tntdulcimers@yahoo.com

River of Dreams
Prairie Smoke

Erin Hussey, Betsy Knowles, Rita Koch-Thometz, Jon Stuttgen, Tom Walter

Artist Statement: This CD includes original, traditional, and favorite songs and tunes from Celtic and American styles

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(including Canada). Many of the cuts include hammered or mountain dulcimer. The title cut by our bass player is featured at www.explorelacrosse.com/ (River of Dreams video) with Erin on harmony and a Native American style flute.

King of the Faeries/The Banshee; Woodchucks Playing/Driving thru Kentucky; Red-winged Blackbird; Harvest Home/ Haste to the Wedding/Off She Goes; ***Prairie Waltz****; Down the River on the Julia Belle; All that is Gold; The Butterfly/ Morrison's Jig; Missing You; River of Dreams; Mountain Field; Bald Eagle Two Step; Over the Waterfall/Wind that Shakes the Barley; Will the Circle Be Unbroken; Growling Old Man/ Rickett's Hornpipe; Ballydesmond Polkas 1 and 2; Dance with Me; It is Love; Another Day; Down in the Valley to Pray*

Erin Hussey
608-386-7042
W3876 Hickory Terrace
La Crosse, WI 54601
www.prairiesmokemusic.com
erintony@centurytel.net

At Your Request

Mark Gilston

Artist Statement: Favorite concert pieces from the wonderfully versatile singer and virtuoso on the mountain dulcimer and English concertina. Balkan favorites, songs and dances from the British Isles and beautifully haunting Scandinavian melodies.

Zillertaler Laendler; Snoshti si Rada; Panagyurska Rachenitsa; Vchera Mina; Dura; More Čiča Reče; Bezzi Laendler ; A Trip to Paris; John Bull, the Englishman, the Irishman, and the Scotsman; Dick's Maggot; Saddle the Pony; Jack Tar on Shore; Kesh Jig Merrily Kissed the Quaker's Wie; Patrick Spenser; Foxhunter's Reel; Wedding March from Älvdalen; Polska from Älvdalen; Schottish from Porjus; Polska from Almot (Dans på Kolbotten); Slängpolska from Smaland after Bernard Ljungren; Springleik (Oppskrivi etter Jon Holmo); Schottish from Lima; Polska after Gelotte; Slängpolska from Skane; We Parted on the Shore; The Water is Wide

http://markgilston.com
info@markgilston.com
1507 Fall Creek Drive
Cedar Park, TX 78613
512-336-8549

There's a bonus cut on the sampler CD, **She Moved Through the Fair**, sent to us by Ann Robinson. Ann played all the parts including harp and bowed dulcimer.

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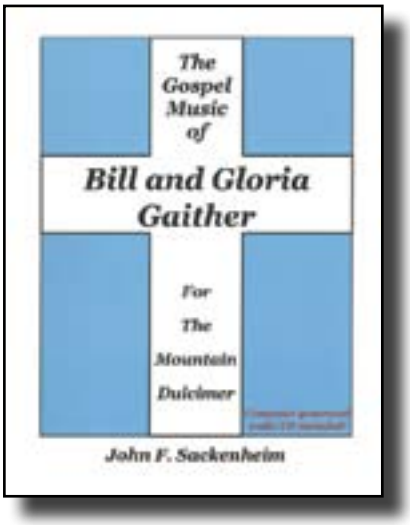
The Gospel Music of Bill and Gloria Gaither for the Mountain Dulcimer

John Sackenheim

Artist Statement: This is my sixth tab book of copyrighted music for the mountain dulcimer. All the songs were written by Bill and Gloria Gaither who received ASCAP's "Gospel Songwriters of the Century" award in 2000. The book has 16 tunes, 20 arrangements total. It includes melody, standard notation, dulcimer tab, backup chords, and lyrics.



Because He Lives; The Church Triumphant Come Holy Spirit; God Loves to Talk to Little Boys While They're Fishin'; Going Home; A Hill Called Mount Calvary; I Am Loved; It Is Finished; Jesus Is Lord of All; Joy Comes In The Morning; Let's Just Praise the Lord; Something Beautiful Thanks to Calvary; There's Something About That Name; This is the Day that the Lord Has Made; Worthy the Lamb

www.johnsackenheim.com
sack@eos.net
PO Box 220
Okeana, OH 45053

50 Easy Arrangements for the Hammered Dulcimer

Bernie Stolls

Artist Statement: Music book and 2 CDs. Easy arrangements to help the beginning player get started and help the advanced beginner and intermediate player expand repertoire. On the CDs, each tune is played slowly, then up to tempo. The book has regular music notation with chords plus an optional tablature system.

West Fork Girls; Road to Boston; Rose Tree; Hundred Pipers; Hull's Victory; Mari's Wedding; Jamie Allen; Rochester Schottische; Farewell to Whiskey; Gaspe Reel; Huntsman's Chorus; My Love Is But a Lassie Yet; Road to California; and more.

BStolls@optonline.net
114 Celia Drive
Jericho, NY 11753
516-433-4192

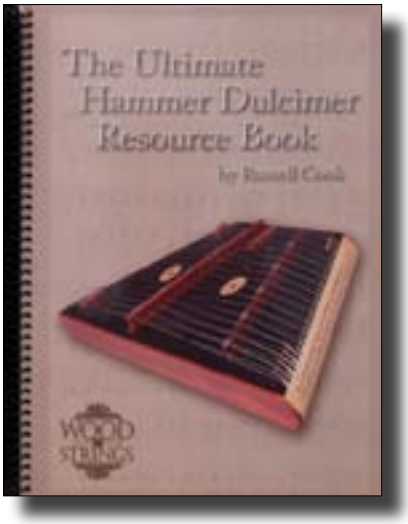
Russell Cook
The Ultimate Hammer Dulcimer Resource Book

Editor's Note: Russell has created an incredibly useful resource with this heavyweight (literally) book. It is one of those books that you may not fully appreciate until you're in front of a student. It seems like every time I need to help a student by showing them something on paper, I reach for, and am satisfied by this book. It is so all encompassing that a review of all it contains would have to be as big as the book itself. There's a good description available on Russell's website: www.masterworksok.com

Reviewed by James Reid

I have really appreciated the Ultimate Hammer Dulcimer Resource book. Four or five year ago, when I was just starting out, I learned to play the hammer dulcimer from reading it. Then, as well as today, I've found it very helpful, thorough, easy to understand, and applicable for any dulcimer player at any level. From just learning to play, I had the theory section and the snapshot section to show me where the patterns were on the instrument. Five years later, as I arrange tunes, I still can use the snapshot section to remind me of alternate chord patterns and I also use the chord section at the end for arranging (as well as for some basic chord theory). Further, now that I have a student of my own, I refer to it constantly. I can't imagine a better visual way to help explain how the hammer dulcimer works. I believe that the Ultimate Hammer Dulcimer Resource book is indispensable, and is a must for any and every hammer dulcimer player. I recommend it to everyone!

580-847-2273
info@masterworksok.com
www.MasterWorksOK.com



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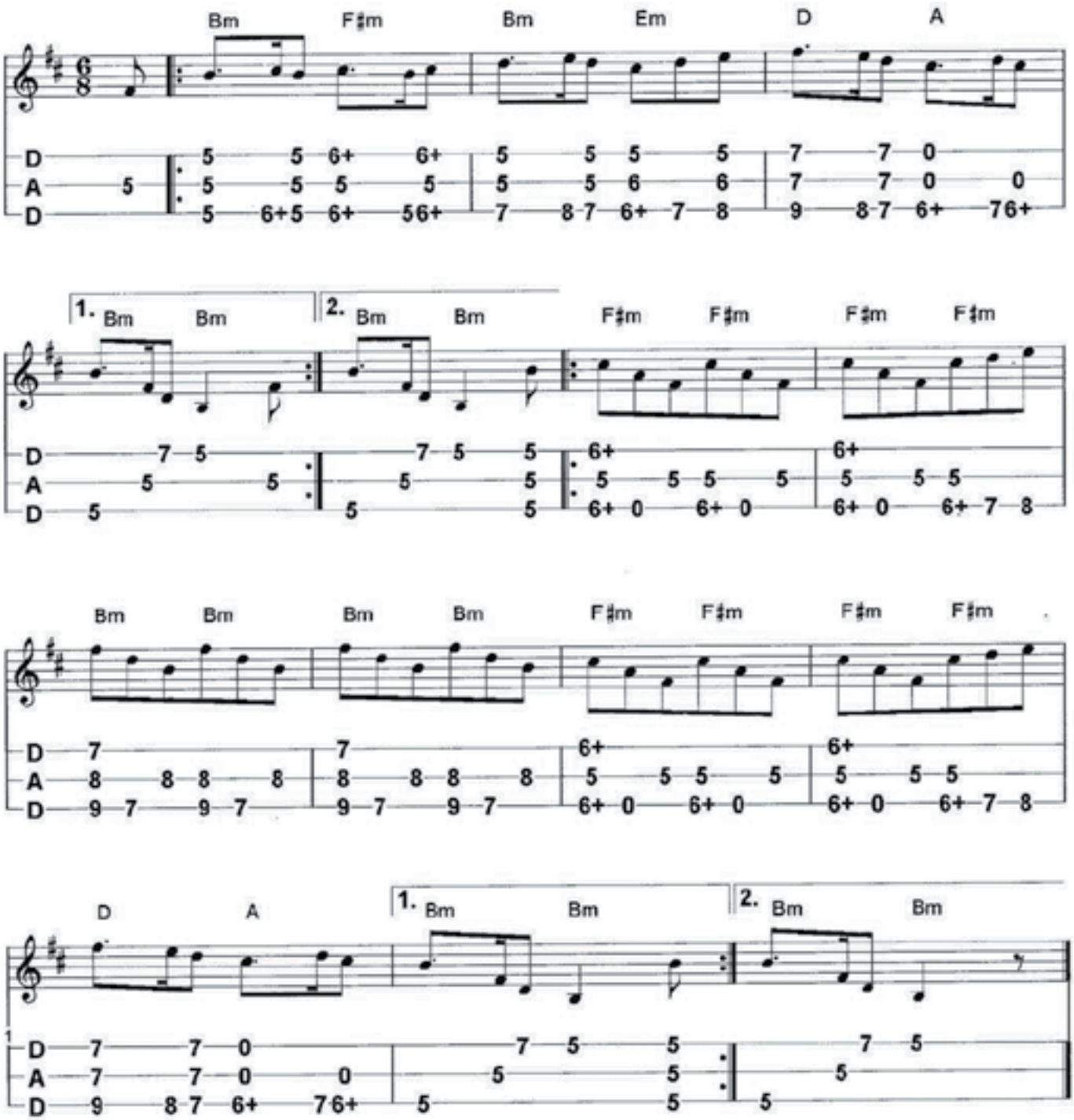
THE BLACK NAG

Playford (1657)

Arrangement © 2007 by Mark Gilston

Originally in the key of G Minor

Capo at the 4th fret.



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Aaron O'Rourke Trio
Dulcimer Transcriptions
Aaron O'Rourke

Aritst Statement: Simple tunes like Liza Jane can be a lot of fun to play and teach. I'd be surprised to meet a dulcimer player who doesn't already know the melody, even if they don't know they know it. I recorded this tune in 2007 on my album Aaron O'Rourke Trio. After quite a few requests for written arrangements of the dulcimer parts on this CD, I enlisted the help of my friend Stephen Seifert. Thanks to his help, I now have my first book.

Dulcimer Transcriptions does a thorough job of interpreting, note for note, these solos. Some of the arrangements are quite involved. For instance, Liza Jane ended up being 9 pages long. We didn't want to compromise the integrity of the transcriptions so I also include simplified versions of each song. On the following 2 pages you'll find a version that is a snapshot from the full version since DPN couldn't give up 9 pages of magazine space to present the entire song. These pages that follow offer variations of the theme of the A part of Liza Jane. The audio of this track is on the enclosed sampler CD to help you get a better understanding of how it is to be played. If the rhythm feels odd at first, try slowing down, and don't forget to let it swing a little. Pay close attention to the accented strums in the recording. They help to add to the syncopated feel of the piece. The sheet music is an exact transcription of the opening measures you'll hear on the CD. The book also includes a CD containing slower, but still transcription accurate, versions of every tune.

The dulcimer used in this recording is my old Lacewood with Redwood back Modern Mountain Dulcimer. This dulcimer was gift from Eddie and Lorine Jackson and is the first dulcimer I ever really owned. Up until then every dulcimer I played was a loaner. I'm forever grateful to them for getting me such a high quality instrument for my first dulcimer.

Song List: Insomniac, Larry, Singin' 7s, Liza Jane (solo), What if, Key of "D" ish, Kiowa Special, Leather Britches, Turkey in the Straw, John Stenson's #2, Amazing Grace, Soldier's Joy

Aaron O'Rourke
P.O. Box 14855
Tallahassee, FL 32317(850)980-2891
http://www.aaronorourke.com
aaron@aaronorourke.com

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The rules:
(make music)

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Mute,

two hammered dulcimers

no 0verdubs

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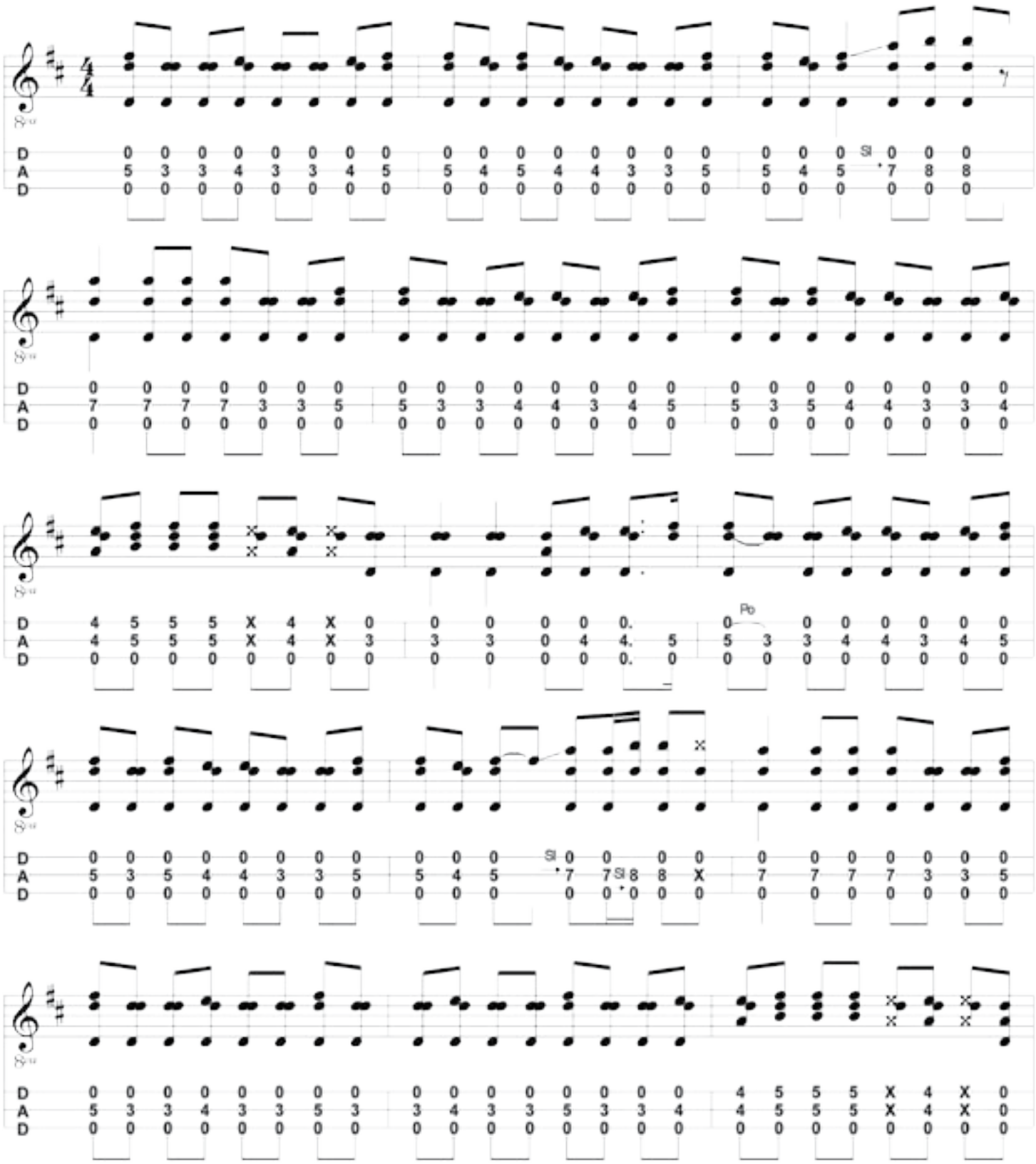
An Excerpt From

Little Liza Jane, trad.

arranged by Aaron O'Rourke

Page 1



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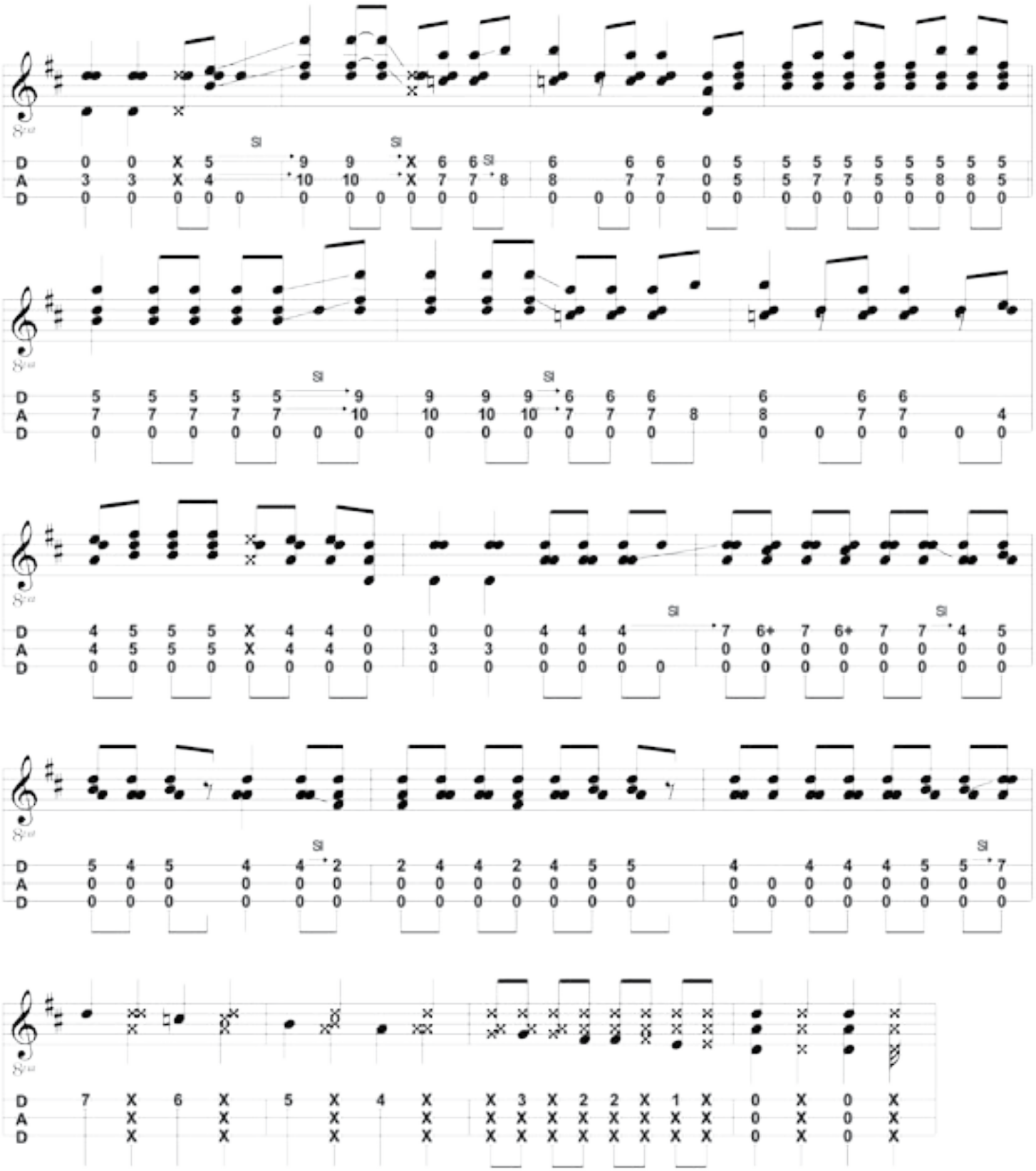

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In The Spotlight: Performing with a German Orchestra

by Jessica Burri

Playing in an orchestra is a unique experience, one that hammered dulcimer players do not often have. After playing in **The Lord of the Rings Symphony** with the orchestra of the city of Aachen here in Germany in 2006, I got another chance to play, this time in the operetta , **Die Herzogin von Chicago**(The Duchess of Chicago) by Emmerich Kálmán, with the opera of the city of Gelsenkirchen.

There is quite a tradition of performing operettas in Germany, and they are very popular and usually well attended. **Die Herzogin** premiered in 1928, towards the end of the heyday of the operetta genre. Kálmán wanted to compose something that was a bit different. He incorporated jazz elements into the music, and the story is a sort of showdown between the cultures of the Old and the New World. Because of the jazz, the Nazis banned the piece, since jazz was considered to be degenerate. After that, **Die Herzogin** was put into a drawer and forgotten.

Gelsenkirchen took it out of the drawer and put on an unusual production, which turned out to be rather controversial. The critiques were fairly bad, but I and many others just loved it. The dialog had been completely rewritten with references, among other things, to current politics. It is at times very funny, and the story does get lost in the shuffle, but, who cares? The audience goes to the operetta to hear beautiful voices singing lovely music, and to have a good time. I certainly did during all 10 performances.

In this production, the orchestra pit was covered and the singers used it as a stage. There was a huge gramophone in the middle of the stage and a lot of the action took place on it. The orchestra switched places with the singers and was on the stage on risers. There was a staircase in the middle of the risers and an entrance at the top of the stairs which was used for wonderful, Broadway style entrances, which also reminded me of old Hollywood musicals. There were beautiful costumes, including my favorite: a wide, red satin, padded skirt for the soubrette. The skirt was a 1920s style car, complete with hood, fenders, licence plates, and lights that worked.

Productions at professional German theaters are very professional indeed. I remember this from my own time as an operatic soloist at various theaters. There is plenty of rehearsal time for orchestra and singers. The sets, costumes, wigs, and props are all created in house, and no expense is spared. The performances went well, including the final one, at which it is traditional to do silly things, such

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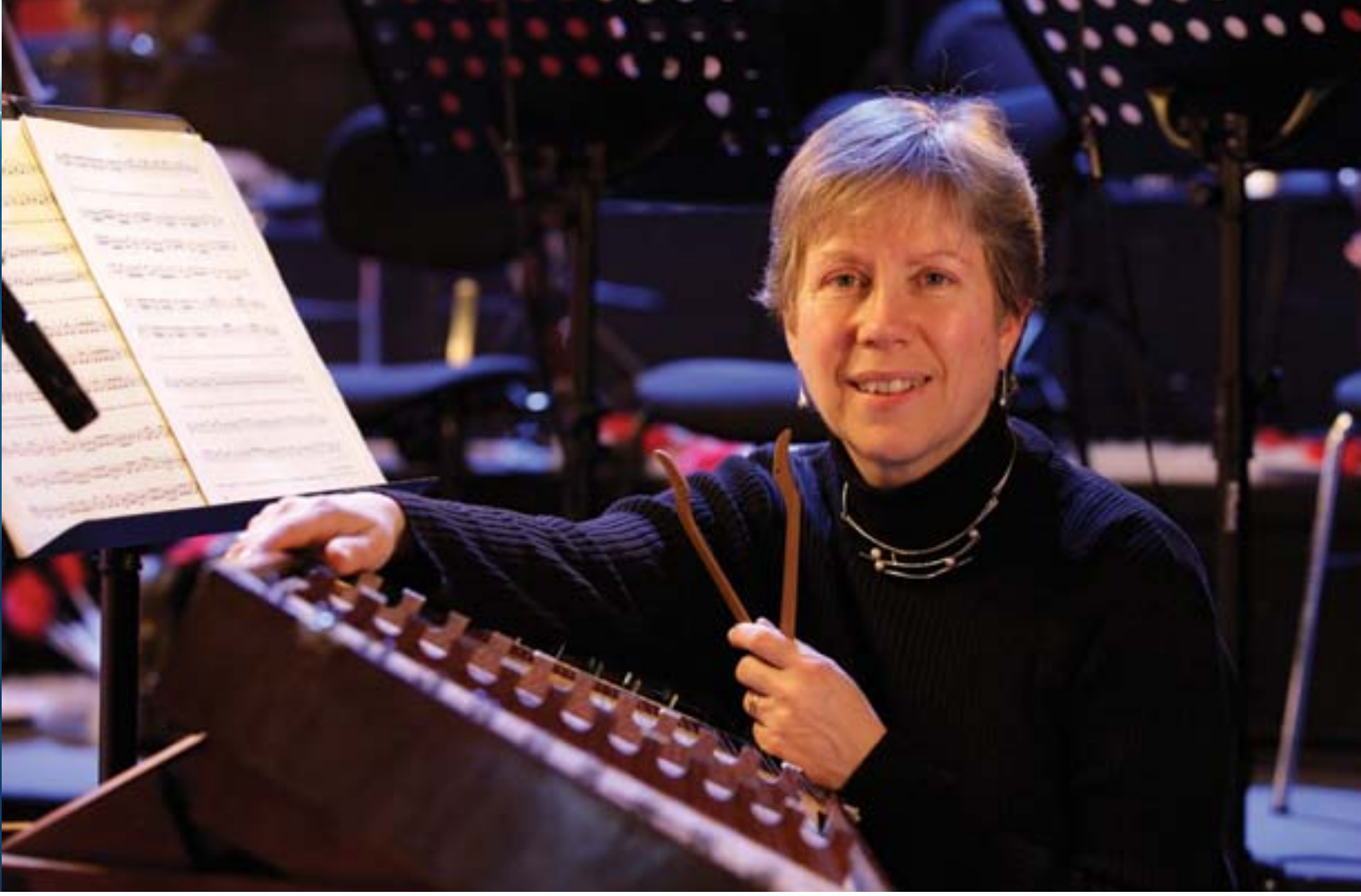

as extra dialog gags. I was very sad when we had the last performance, after only 10 times. Operettas usually run about 30 times, but **Die Herzogin** is too obscure to attract enough audience for that.

You may be wondering what a hammered dulcimer player is doing in the orchestra of an operetta. The leading man is a Hungarian prince (Kálmán was Hungarian) who loves classical music, including traditional Hungarian music. He sings a nostalgic aria about life in Hungary, and following that there is a czardas and an instrumental dance section. The prince is accompanied by a small group in the orchestra, which is more or less a gypsy band, which, of course, includes a cimbalom.

Next year, I have a project with the orchestra performing a series of children's concerts. I will be telling the Greek myth, **Europe** (storytelling being one of my specialties), and accompanying myself on the dulcimer. The orchestra will accompany me as well. Since the orchestra already knows me, I was asked if I could play the cimbalom part. When I finally got the music, I realized that it was impossible for me to play. The conductor called me up and said that it would be fine to change the music to suit my dulcimer, which I duly did.

Playing in an orchestra takes some getting used to and is only to be recommended for musically experienced players. You have to learn to understand the conducting and, of course, to know when you are on, since all players have only their own parts. As we all know, playing without looking at the strings is a challenge for hammered dulcimer players. It is of course necessary to look at the conductor from time to time, especially at a tempo change. The czardas, being in the dulcimer unfriendly key of D minor, was the most difficult part to play in this respect. With all the leaping around the instrument that D minor requires, I could not look up all the time. I did manage to speed up with the orchestra very nicely by ear, and look up at the critical moments for the retards. Afterwards, I was told how precisely I had played and was glad they had not noticed the mistakes!

Die Herzogin was a wonderful experience, which I hope I'll have again soon. I have called up another nearby theater to let them know I'm there, in case they need something like a dulcimer. Who knows, maybe I'll land another orchestra gig in the near future.

Jessica Burri, Sopran & Dulcimer
Breuskesbachstr. 2A
45659 Recklinghausen

www.sopran-dulcimer.de

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Congratulations

Dulcimer Players News congratulates those who were willing to practice hard, quench their fears, and take the stage to compete in regional dulcimer contests. If you're a contest organizer, don't forget to send us your winners list as soon as possible after the contest. We recognize that contest formats vary from festival to festival, so tell us what is unique about yours. At minimum, we'd like to have the following:

- Contest Name and Place
- Person's Place in Contest
- Person's Name
- City, ST of person
- Tunes Performed by 1st Place Winners
- Photos (with names, please)

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- 1st Jaekob Greene, Houston, TX
- 2nd Keith Reynolds, Labette City, KS
- 3rd Matthew Hathaway, Ft. Worth, TX

Hammered Dulcimer
- 1st Leta Sage, Dublin, TX
- 2nd Carolyn Arrington, Victoria, TX

Colorado Dulcimer Festival
Fort Collins, CO

Mountain Dulcimer
- 1st Irma Reeder, Albuquerque, NM
- 2nd Tessa Dowell, Los Alamos, NM
- 3rd Beth Kloska, Morrison, CO

Hammered Dulcimer
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- 2nd Laura Fisher, Nederland, CO
- 3rd Hannah LeTourneau, Loveland, CO

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- 2nd Keith Reynolds
- 3rd Nathaniel Samsel
- 4th Eileen Hinkle
- 5th Spike Huff

Hammered Dulcimer
- 1st Lisa Ferguson
- 2nd Kathie Jerrell
- 3rd Maxine Dennison
- 4th Dana Vaughn
- 5th Scott Kirchner

Ensemble
- 1st Folk Strings
- 2nd Mountain Do
- 3rd Distant Hills

Coshocton Dulcimer Days
Coshocton, OH

photo by Jackie Cichon

Mountain Dulcimer
- 1st Hunter Walker (front center)
- 2nd Linda Sigismondi (back right)
- 3rd Emily Pritchard (front right)

Hammered Dulcimer
- 1st Karen Alley (front left)
- 2nd Kathie Jerrell (back left)

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July 5-10

Common Ground on the Hill, Traditions Week I

Westminster, MD

Instructors: Dan Landrum, Stephen Humphries, Walt Michael, Bill Troxler, Lois Hornbostel, Susan Boyer Haley, Ken Bloom, and many others. Contact: Walt Michael, 410-857-2771, cgothregistrar@yahoo.com. www.commongroundonthehill.org. Location: McDaniel College, 2 College Hill, Westminster, MD 21157

July 6-11

MD Week in the Shenandoah Valley

Winchester, VA

Instructors: Madeline MacNeil, Molly McCormack, Larry Conger, Leo Kretzner, and Ralph Lee Smith. Contact: Jo Miller, 540-665-5442, jmille3@su.edu, www.su.edu/gce

July 11-12

Common Ground on the Hill Roots Music & Arts Festival

Westminster, MD

Two day, four stage roots music and arts festival featuring instructors from Traditions Weeks I & II and many, many more. Festival headliners are Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mountain Boys (Sat) and Tim O'Brien (Sun). Contact: See previous event. Location: Carroll County Farm Museum, 500 S. Center St., Westminster, MD 21157

July 12-17

Common Ground on the Hill Traditions Week II

Westminster, MD

Instructors: Jeanean Martin, Walt Michael, and Bill Troxler in hammered dulcimer. Contact: Walt Michael. See Week I. Location: McDaniel College. See Week I.

July 16-19

37th Annual Dulcimer Funfest

Evart, MI

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July 23-25

Bayou City Oldtime Music and Dulcimer Festival

Houston, TX

Three days of workshops, jamming and concerts. Contact: Gordon White, 281-449-1632, gswhite@hal-pc.org, 4818 Cicada Lane, Houston, TX 77039, www.geocities.com/bayoucityfestival/. Location: First Baptist Church North Houston, 4422 Lauder Road, Houston, TX 77039

July 24-25

Redwood Dulcimer Weekend

Bonny Doon, CA

Instructors: Linda Brockinton, Dan Daniels, Neal Hellman, Peter Tommerup, and more. Contact: Janet Herman, 831-429-1691, fasola@cruzio.com, 205 Jackson St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060, www.folkplanet.com. Location: Boomeria, 60 Verde Drive, Bonny Doon, CA 95060

July 24-26

Cranberry Dulcimer & Autoharp Gathering

Manlius, NY

Instructors: Bill Collins, Dan Duggan, Adam Miller. Contact: CarolLynn Langley, 518-283-4769 or 518-596-2288, clglangley@juno.com, 282 Blue Factory Road, Averill Park, NY 12018, www.cranberrygathering.com. Location: Kellish Hill Farm, 3192 Pompey Center Road, Manlius, NY 13104

July 26-31

Heritage Dulcimer Camp

Parkville, MO

A week long musical experience for both hammered and mountain dulcimer players. Contact: Sharon Lindenmeyer, 785-472-4285, slndmyr@carrollsweb.com, 405 Court, Ellsworth, KS 67439, www.heritagedulcimercamp.org. Location: Presbyterian Conference Center, 16965 NW Hwy 45, Parkville, MO 64152

August 1-5

Dulcimer Beginnings at Alabama Folk School

Nauvoo, AL

A four day beginner mountain dulcimer class with Bob and Rose Taunton. Contact: Danielle Dunbar, 205-563-9990, folkschool@campmcdowell.com, 105 DeLong Road, Nauvoo, AL 35578, www.campmcdowell.com/folkschool. Location: same

August 2-8

Dulcimer Week at the Swannanoa Gathering

Asheville,NC

Instructors: Dan Landrum, Walt Michael, Bill Taylor, Susan Trump, Ken Kolodner, Bill Troxler, Lois Hornbostel, Cindy Ribet, Ruth Smith, Jeff Hames, and Lorinda Jones. Contact: Liz Brace, 828-298-3434, gathering@warren-wilson.edu, Warren Wilson College, PO Box 9000, Asheville, NC 28815-9000, www.swangathering.com. Location: Warren Wilson College, 701 Warren Wilson Road, Swannanoa, NC 28778

August 7-9

Fort New Salem Foundation Dulcimer Festival

Salem, WV

Instructors: Stephen Humphries, Shelley Stevens, Marge Diamond, Jeff Fedan, Guy George, Patty Looman, Heidi Muller, Jerry Rockwell, Bill Schilling, Linda Sigismondi, AbNormal Sines, Steve K. Smith, Steve Stapleton, and Greg & Tish Westman.. Contact: Linda Sigismondi, 740-446-9244, lsigismondi@att.net, 474 Kathy St., Gallipolis, OH 45631, www.lindasigismondi.com/fnsdulcimer.html. Location: Fort New Salem, US Route 50, Salem, WV

August 7-9

Heart of the Alleghenies Folk Music Festival

Bradford, PA

Instructors: Claudia Schmidt, Celticladda, Sterl Van Arsdale, Jim Kimball & Keith Blackmon, TuneScape, Curt Osgood, The Allegheny MD Players, Todd Crowley, Confluence, Simple Faith, Diana Wagner, Larry Spencer & Gayle Sheets, Gerry Hoffman, and more. Contact : Sue Neth, 814-825-8971, sueneth@aol.com, 5208 Cider Mill Rd., Erie, PA 16509, www.hotafest.org. Location: Univ. of Pittsburgh/Bradford, 300 Campus Dr., Bradford, PA 16701

August 14-16

6th Annual Little Rock Dulcimer Getaway

Little Rock, AR

Instructors: Linda Brockinton, Larry Conger, Scott Odena, Wessa Boyd, David Moran, David Peterson, and Charles Whitmer. Contact: Jim Munns, 501-765-1131, ADS@PHBCLR.com. Location: Pulaski Heights Baptist Church, 2200 Kavanaugh Blvd., Little Rock, AR 72205

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August 16-20

Walnut Valley Festival

Winfield, KS

Home of the National Mountain & Hammer Dulcimer Championships. Contact: Paulette Rush, 620-221-3250, hq@wvfest.com, PO Box 245, Winfield, KS 67156. Location: 1105 West 9th, Winfield, KS 67156

August 27

16th Annual Midland Dulcimer Festival

Midland, MI

Contact: John Skaryd, 989-781-0849, john@dulcimers.com, 11239 Lake Circle Drive North, Saginaw, MI 48609. Location: Midland County Fairgrounds, 6905 Eastman Road, Midland, MI 48640

September 5-6

Metamora Old Time Music Festival

Metamora, IN

A two day celebration of traditional music on the banks of the Whitewater Canal. Contact: Al Rogers, 765-647-2194, metamora@gamil.com, 18207 US Rt 52, Metamora, IN 47030, www.metamoramusic.pbworks.com. Location: 18507 Lovers Lane, Metamora, IN 47030

September 11-12

Bluegrass Creek Dulcimer Festival

Evansville, IN

Instructors: Kendra Ward, Bob Bence, Bing Futch, Sam Stone, Don Neuhauser, and The Shade Tree Players. Contact: David Donner, 812-867-3917, dulcimerd@sbcglobal.net, 16900 Petersburg Rd., Evansville, IN 47725, www.bluegrasscreek.com. Location: Camp Reveal, 1040 Boonville New Harmony Rd., Evansville, IN 47725

September 11-13

Greenwood Furnace Folk Gathering

Huntingdon, PA

Contact: Ilona Ballreich at The Huntingdon County Arts Council, 814-643-6220, huntingdonarts@comcast.net , P.O. Box 216, Huntingdon, PA 16652, www.folkgathering.com, Greenwood Furnace State Park, 15795 Greenwood Road, Huntingdon, PA 16652

September 18-20

Harmony Harvest Dulcimer Festival

Lancaster, OH

Workshops, jamming, concerts. Headliner-Butch Ross. Contact: Gary Sager or Prussia Valley Dulcimers Music Shop, 740-947-4767, or 740-941-1271, pvdulcimers@bright.net, 122 N. Market St., Waverly, OH 45690. Location: 152 E. Fair Ave., Lancaster, OH 43130

September 18-20

Double Dulcimer Gathering

Madison, AL

Instructors: Don Pedi and local instructors. Contact: Ron Zuckerman, 256-830-4830, hsvmda2009@gmail.com, PO Box 4854 Huntsville, AL 35815-4854, www.everythingdulcimer.com/mda/dd. Location: 4257 Sullivan St. Madison, AL 35758

September 23-26

Melodies and Musings

Guntersville, AL

Three days of dulcimer workshops, writing and storytelling sessions, and an Appalachian festival. Instructors: Don Pedi, Maureen Sellers, Larry Conger, Linda Brockinton, and others. Contact: Susy Quiggle, 256-571-7734, susy@mcrsvp.org, 1805 Gunter Ave., Guntersville, AL 35976, www.melodies-and-musings.com. Location: 1500 Sunset Drive, Guntersville, AL 35976

September 25-26

Memphis Dulcimer Gathering & Folk Festival

Memphis, TN

Instructors: Bob Bence, Lee Cagle, Betty Dawson, Jeff Hames, Steve Seifert, Rick Thum, and Kendra Ward.. Contact: Lee Cagle, 901-877-7763, Lee@LeeCagleDulcimers.com, P.O. Box 224, Moscow, TN 38057, www.LeeCagleDulcimers.com. Location: 4680 Walnut Grove Road, Memphis, TN 38117

October 1-4

Winter Creek Reunion

Bennington, OK

Instructors: Bing Futch, Cathy Barton, Dave Para, David Mahler, Bill Thurman, and Lloyd & April Wright. Contact: Laurel Hamrick, 903-465-9081 or 903-640-0003, rrvdc@texoma.net, 212 S. Burnett Ave., Denison, TX 75020, www.texomalinks.com/rrvdc, 624 Acorn Lane, Bennington, OK 74723

October 2-3

Nutmeg Dulcimer Festival

Milford, CT

Over 40 workshops on HD, MD, and others. Instructors: Jem Moore, Min Tze Wu, Aaron O'Rourke, Joshua Horowitz, Cookie Segelstein, Max ZT, Jody Marshall, Nina Zanetti, Moto Fukushima, and more. Contact: Sam Edelston, 203-661-0503, info@NutmegDulcimer.com, 34 Daffodil Lane, Cos Cob, CT 06807, www.NutmegDulcimer.com. Location: 168 Broad St., Milford, CT 06460

October 2-4

Harvest Festival of Dulcimers

Dana Point, CA

Instructors: Kim McKee, Ken Willson, and Dave Haas. Contact: Jim Romano, 562-861-7049,dulcimer@scdh.org, PO Box 5477, Buena Park, CA 90622, www.scdh.org. Location: OC Sailing & Events Center, 34451 Ensenada Pl., Dana Point, CA 92629

October 10

Red Hill Music Festival

Sumner, IL

Instructors: Tull Glazener, Molly McCormack, Mike Anderson, Rick Thum, and Doug Hawf. Contact: Jerry Pacholski, 618-943-5610, jerrypacholski@verizon.net, 508 20th St., Lawrenceville, IL 62439, www.rhdulcimers.com. Location: 400 S Christy Ave., Sumner, IL 62466

November 4-6

Iowa HD Retreat

Washington, IA

An intensive weeklong workshop for intermediate and advanced players taught by Ken Kolodner. Contact: Ken Kolodner at kenkolodner@aol.com or Jeff Nayadley at jeffn60@gmail.com. Location: Crooked Creek Christian Camp, 2830 Coppock Road, Washington, IA 52353

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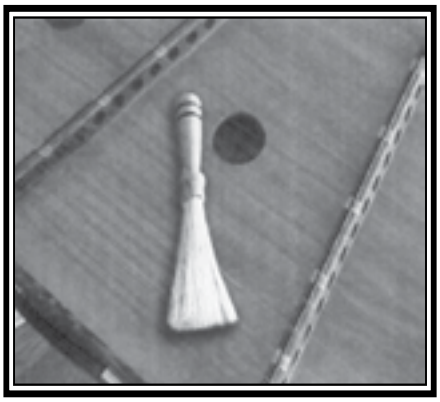

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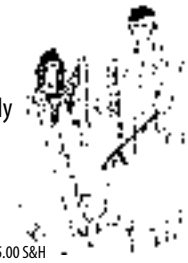

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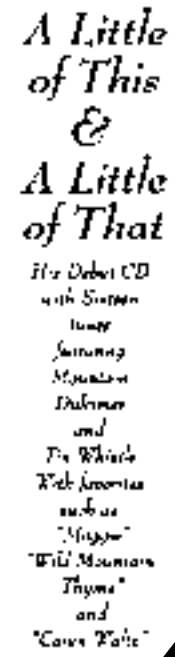

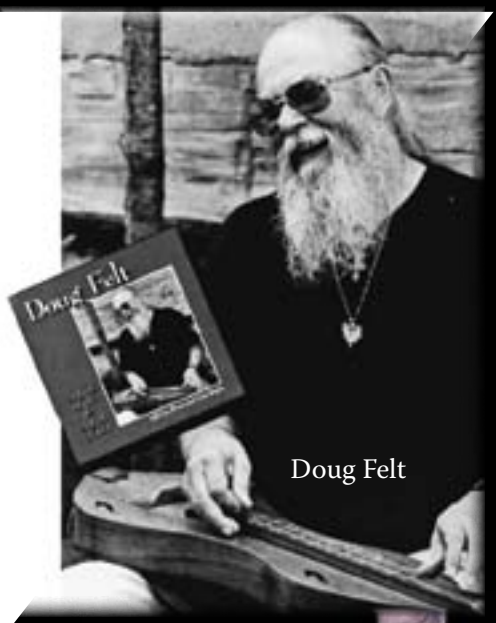

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